

The prisoners have been employed chiefly in digging, draining, and cropping the land attached to the prison, a good area of which is planted with potatoes and vegetables. The potatoes give every appearance of a good yield, and the daily supply for use of the prisoners is now being taken from them. The prison-yard has been gravelled, and the road through the prison-grounds widened and heightened. This necessitated a large quantity of gravel being got out of the gravel-pit, but the road is now in perfect order.

A new fence has been erected between the male and female portions of the prison, and a portion of the old timber in boundary-wall replaced with new. Gas has also been laid on to the cells, and is much appreciated by the prisoners.

Work has been done in cemetery, cleaning grounds at Supreme and Magistrate's Court, Customhouse, police-station, High School, and Hospital, as required.

It is proposed to plant the Prison Reserve with *Phormium tenax*, and a start has been made to drain and trench a portion of the ground, but little has yet been done: the season has been very wet, and, the land being all swampy, it is seldom dry enough to work on.

A new residence for the Gaoler is urgently required, the present one being in an advanced state of decay.

FIRST OFFENDERS' PROBATION ACT.

There were two males placed on probation during the year: one completed his term in a satisfactory manner, the other was transferred to Westport.

The Inspector of Prisons, Wellington.

A. W. IRONSIDE,
Gaoler and Probation Officer.

INVERCARGILL PRISON.

H.M. Prison, Invercargill, 10th January, 1908.

I was appointed Gaoler here on the 17th May last, and took over my duties on the 27th of the same month.

There were two reports against officers during the year, both for being late for duty. In one case a probation warder resigned; the other was dealt with by the Inspector of Prisons.

Two probation warders were appointed during the year, and, having passed the usual examination, have been permanently appointed.

There were in confinement on the 1st January, 1907, 15 male and no female prisoners; the number admitted during the year were 89 males and 4 females: making a total of 104 males and 4 females dealt with during the year, being 2 males and 2 females less than for 1906. Discharges for the same period numbered 81 males and 4 females; leaving 23 males in custody on the 31st December last.

One hard-labour prisoner was found to be insane, and was removed to a mental hospital; 5 male prisoners were received on remand suffering from the effects of drink. Satisfactory arrangements have now been made with the hospital authorities for the reception of such cases, on the gaol surgeon's recommendation, where he deems removal advisable or necessary.

Four male and 1 female lunatic were received on remand. I am pleased to state that, owing to the much more humane plan now being adopted of sending such cases to the hospital for examination as to their sanity, the number of such unfortunate persons received into the prison is very much less than formerly, and, when another padded room has been added to the present one now in use at the hospital, should cease altogether. It is nothing less than positively cruel to send such cases to a prison for treatment, even for a few days, and the Hospital Superintendent is deserving of the greatest commendation for receiving such cases into the institution under his control, often at great inconvenience and risk both to himself and his staff, in order that they may be properly treated. Certainly a gaol is no place for such cases, for even in their unfortunate mental condition the majority seem to realise that they are in a prison and feel consequently distressed, and it certainly has a tendency to increase their malady.

The rations supplied have been good. There have been no complaints, and, as we grow our own supply of potatoes and vegetables, we have no trouble on that score.

The conduct and industry of the prisoners generally has been very good, only three prisoners having been punished for minor prison offences during the year.

No deaths have occurred during the year. Two prisoners were removed to the public hospital for treatment, one suffering from a poisoned thumb, and the other for medical treatment for lunacy. Both were brought back again, one to complete his sentence, and the other for discharge.

Besides keeping the Post-office grounds in order, and doing some necessary work at the police-station as required, the prisoners have been constantly employed on the new prison and site. The building of the new prison continues to progress very satisfactorily, and at the present rate the concrete work should be pretty well completed by the end of 1908. Up to the present, about 2,700 yards of concrete and rubble have been mixed and placed in position, the whole of the shingle required for the same having been excavated and prepared by the prisoners from the deposits on the new-gaol site. In connection with the above, I have very great pleasure in testifying to the splendid work being done by a number of the prisoners, especially so when it is considered that the whole work of construction has been carried out by men who have had very little previous experience of that particular class of work. Men who are undergoing long sentences could, if they wished it, with safety to themselves, spoil a lot of valuable material; and yet never have I found any such attempt being made. The work of construction has up to the present progressed both rapidly and satisfactorily.

During the past year both the interior and exterior of the old prison has received a thorough overhaul and is now in first-class order, and with necessary care should not require any further expenditure, as it will meet all requirements until the new building is available.