

Some years ago the Department decided to keep a stock of reserve provisions at isolated lighthouses, from which the keepers could obtain supplies in the case of there being delay in the visits of the attending steamer; but it has been found that very few of the stores were used, and it has therefore been decided that in future the only things that will be kept in the reserve stock will be flour, sugar, and tea.

Captain Bollons, of the s.s. "Hinemoa," has continued to inspect the lighthouses on the vessel's periodical trips with oil and stores, and I have made inspection visits to those at Bean Rock, Ponui Passage, Tiritiri, Cuvier Island, Mokohinou, Cape Brett, Cape Maria van Diemen, Kaipara, Manukau North and South Heads, Nelson, Cape Foulwind, and Godley Head. I found that these stations were in good order, and that the keepers were carrying out their duties in a satisfactory manner.

One principal keeper retired on superannuation during the year on account of ill health, and six assistant keepers resigned. To fill the vacancies thus caused, and vacancies which arose through the deaths of two keepers in the previous year, nine new appointments were made.

A fresh contract has been let for carrying a monthly mail between the French Pass Post-office and Stephens Island Lighthouse, and a new contract for the mail-service between Opoutama and Portland Island Lighthouse is being arranged for, as the man who has been carrying on the service has given it up.

The following works have been carried out at the lighthouses:—

Mokohinou: The drains have been renewed and the fowlhouses repaired.

Tiritiri: Wash-houses and coal-sheds have been erected.

Cuvier Island: Two rooms have been added to the second assistant keeper's house.

Cape Egmont: A new fence has been erected.

Kaipara Head: A wash-house has been moved and re-erected.

Akaroa Head: The wash-houses have been enlarged and coppers fitted in them.

Cape Saunders: Roofs have been renewed and coppers put in wash-houses.

Nugget Point: A wash-house, coal-shed, &c., have been erected at the first assistant keeper's house.

Waipapapa Point: Porches have been erected at the dwellinghouses, and material has been procured for new fences.

Dog Island: A new roof has been put on the principal keeper's wash-house.

Centre Island: A flaghouse, boat-shed, and fowlhouse have been erected.

Farewell Spit: A new fence has been erected.

An Order in Council has been made providing that vessels arriving from outside the Dominion shall pay oversea light dues at the first port of arrival, and coastal dues at other New Zealand ports at which they call, and also that vessels arriving from the Chatham, Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, and Bounty Islands shall pay coastal dues.

The amount of light dues collected was £38,232 0s. 11d., as compared with £36,749 3s. 9d. during the previous year.

*Fog-signals.*—The explosive fog-signals at Pencarrow Head, Godley Head, Tairaroa Head, and Cuvier Island have worked satisfactorily, and have been maintained in an efficient manner. It is proposed to procure a fog-signal for erection at the North Cape when the lighthouse is erected there.

*Harbours.*—The work of overhauling and cleaning the buoys and beacons in the harbours under the control of the Department has been carried out by the s.s. "Hinemoa." One of the beacons at the entrance to Whangaparapara Harbour was blown over, but it has been re-erected and is now in good condition. General Harbour Regulations to ensure the protection of life and property on vessels in harbours have been made.

A large number of logs which were dangerous to navigation have been removed from Hokianga Harbour. In the case of those of which the owners can be identified from the brands, the cost of removal will be recovered from them. A wall is being erected at Kohukohu to enable a shallow part of the harbour near the wharf to be reclaimed. It is intended when the reclamation is completed to cut up the land and lease it for building purposes. The oil-launch used by the Harbourmaster at this port is becoming unfit for the heavy work which she has to perform, and it is intended to substitute the launch now used by the Inspector of Fisheries and Beaches at Auckland as soon as the new launch which is now being built for that officer is completed.

An acetylene light is being erected at Shelly Beach, in the Kaipara River, for the benefit of vessels plying to and from Helensville, and the channel of this river has been further improved by the removal of some more of the rock that obstructed navigation.

A beacon has been erected on a rock in Okahumoko Bay, Whangaroa Harbour.

An acetone-acetylene light giving 0·3 seconds light and 2·7 seconds darkness, or twenty flashes of 0·3 seconds' duration every minute, has been erected on Dieffenbach Point, at the junction of Queen Charlotte Sound and Tory Channel, and has proved to be of great benefit to shipmasters. This is an automatic light, and does not require a keeper to attend to it. When a fresh supply of gas is required, a charged cylinder is taken down from Picton by the Harbourmaster, who brings the empty cylinder away and sends it to Napier to be refilled. One cylinder of gas lasts sixty days, and should it be desired to visit the light less frequently, all that would be required would be to send down and connect with the light more than one cylinder of gas. A similar light, but of higher power, has been procured for Bean Rock, in Auckland Harbour.

During the year the system of issuing licenses to take shingle and sand from certain portions of the foreshore in the Hauraki Gulf, and at Tutukaka and Whangaruru, has been adopted, a royalty being charged on what is taken. A large number of vessels are engaged in the trade, as there is a large demand for the material in Auckland. Mr. J. P. Bennett has been appointed Inspector of Beaches, and instructions have been given to him to see that, in taking the material, no damage is done to the adjoining land.