

the property is being proceeded with. Stock and produce to the value of £1,373 has been sold during the year. This is exclusive of the value of stock and produce used in the maintenance of the inmates.

At Invercargill the main operations, apart from buildings, &c., have been, as in previous years, connected with the carrying-out of the reclamation scheme. This work has, I am pleased to say, turned out a complete success. Shortly after the water had been shut off by the enclosing embankment the work of development was commenced by burning off an area of 40 acres of waewae. This block was formerly covered with sea-water at spring tides. As soon as the marshy growth was dry enough it was fired and grass-seed surface-sown over the area. Within a period of ten months the grass had become fit for cutting, the yield of hay being no less than 35 tons from the 40 acres. Shortly after the hay crop was gathered forty-six head of young cattle were purchased and put to graze on the land which only ten months before had been under water. A further area of 10 acres was disked and sown down in turnips, the seed being sown broadcast. The resultant crop was eminently satisfactory. A dairy with milking-machines is being installed, and during the coming season it is expected that fully fifty head of heifers will become available for milking purposes. Much still requires to be done before the Department will be able to reap the full advantage from this property. A roading and drainage scheme has been prepared by the Chief Drainage Engineer, Mr. J. B. Thompson, who since the inception of this work has taken a keen interest in its progress, and once this programme has been completed the Prisons Department will be in possession of one of the most reproductive farms in the Dominion. For dairying purposes it could not be excelled, and within the next few years an ample return sufficient to more than recoup the Department for the value of the labour expended should be assured. It should also be borne in mind that, in addition to the 650 acres comprising the property of the Prisons Department, a further area of some 1,600 acres has been made available for the use of the Invercargill Borough Council. The work of developing the prison property is being carried out by prison officers under the direction of Mr. J. McCulloch, Fields Supervisor, an officer of the Agricultural Department. A further work of considerable importance at present in progress at Invercargill is the construction of an up-to-date rifle range for the Defence Department. This work is of a similar nature to that already completed for the Invercargill Borough Council, and consists of the building of a massive embankment for the purpose of keeping out the tidal waters of the Invercargill Estuary. The area which it is proposed to reclaim amounts to slightly over 300 acres. This when completed, besides providing the Defence Department with a very necessary rifle range, will give them a very valuable property in the form of 300 acres of rich dairying country. This work is also being carried out exclusively by prison labour, controlled by prison officers under the supervision of the Public Works Engineer. The value of the prison labour employed in connection with the various reclamation works referred to is estimated by the Public Works Engineer at the sum of £6,189 for the year ended 31st March last.

It will thus be seen that a considerable amount of useful and reproductive work has been performed by prisoners during the past year. Provided the Prisons Department receives a fair degree of support from the various Government Departments, there is no reason whatever why every able-bodied prisoner's labour should not be profitably utilized. Work is the foundation of all intelligent schemes of reform, but the work must be of a useful, reproductive nature. Otherwise the men whom it is intended to benefit will feel degraded by the uselessness of their task, and will in time come to look upon work as a form of punishment. The Prisons Department has set itself out to provide work of the kind required by moving prisoners wherever possible out into the country, and so giving them an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves.

TREE-PLANTING.

Kaingaroa is now our only afforestation camp, the Waipa area having been fully planted and the camp in that locality closed down before the presentation of last year's report. The work has, however, been carried on vigorously at Kaingaroa, as indicated in the returns of the Forestry Department and in the report of the Acting-Gaoler in charge.

For some months past the camp has been largely utilized as a place of detention for military court-martialled prisoners, and at the present time they constitute the larger proportion of the inmates. They are kept entirely separate from prisoners sentenced by the Civil Courts, and are employed at useful, healthy outdoor work under the best possible conditions.

The returns furnished by the Forestry Department show that 1,839,800 trees were planted on the Kaingaroa Plains during the twelve months ended 31st December last, while a large amount of clearing, roadmaking, and other work essential to tree-planting operations was carried out.

The transfer credit received by the Prisons Department for the prison labour employed at this work for last financial year amounted to £3,145, but of this sum £737 should have been credited to the previous year.

The area planted by prison labour during the past seventeen years, and the labour-value of the work calculated according to free-labour standards, are shown in the table below :—

Area planted by Prison Labour from 1901 to March, 1918.	Number of Trees planted.	Labour-value of Prisoners' Work.
14,189 acres	38,378,500	£60,143