

Devonport—9th April, 1920 : Inspection of brigade and its equipment.

Rotorua (King George V Hospital)—Inspection and report.

Trentham Camp—27th May, 1920 : Inspection and report.

Following upon an invitation received from the executive officers of the United Fire Brigades' Association I attended their annual conference, held at Hastings in March last, and delivered an address to the delegates entitled "Suitability of the Military Gas-mask for Fire-brigade Purposes; Repair and Maintenance of Fire-hose, &c." At the request of the conference the address is being printed for circulation amongst the brigades.

Periodical inspections have been made of drill-halls, magazines, ordnance stores, and other buildings under the jurisdiction of the Defence Department. As usual, advice has been given to local bodies and others in relation to fire-prevention, fire risks, water-supply, purchase of new plant; sketch-plans for new stations and additions have been prepared, &c.

It having been found impossible for a single officer to carry out the various duties required under the three respective headings of Inspector of Fire Brigades, Fire Inspector of the Defence Department, and Departmental Fire Inspector (duties under the last heading alone calling for the annual inspection of over nine hundred buildings), in August, 1919, Mr. C. A. Juriss was appointed Assistant Inspector of Fire Brigades and Assistant Departmental Fire Inspector. Since his appointment he has been principally engaged in carrying out the duties of Departmental Fire Inspector, which includes the giving of practical instruction in certain branches of fire protection. So, to reach, with economy both as to time and expense, the many buildings situated in remote districts the Department has provided a two-seater motor-car with the body built suitable for carrying the materials necessary to this particular work.

Consequent upon the number of destructive fires which have occurred in school-buildings during the last three or four years, with the approval of the Education Department, an inspection of all schools under the jurisdiction of the various Education Boards has been undertaken, thus adding some hundreds to the buildings now to be inspected; and already in the course of his inspections the Assistant Inspector has come across conditions in a number of cases which if not remedied will surely, sooner or later, result in an outbreak of fire. I am sorry to say that these inspections have not been taken in a friendly spirit by more than one headmaster.

Provision for protection from fire in the larger cities is not keeping pace with the growth of population, the rapidly increasing number of buildings (many of them of large cubical capacity), and the continually increasing area to be protected due to amalgamation with contiguous boroughs. The difficulty, from a financial point of view, in providing adequate equipment at its present high cost is greatly added to by changes during the last two or three years in social and economic conditions which can only be met by a more extensive provision of married quarters for firemen—a very costly phase of the matter, but an expenditure that must be faced before any high degree of efficiency can be permanently attained.

Following are the principal improvements and additions to equipment :—

Auckland: Purchase of site in Ponsonby Road for the erection of a substation, and to include six cottages for married firemen. The old street fire-alarm system has been replaced in the city proper by the newer and more efficient "Duplex" system.

Dunedin: The old Borough Chambers in Roslyn have been converted into a substation to serve the Roslyn and Upper Maori Hill districts.

Levin: A site has been purchased, and a new central fire-station is in course of erection thereon.

New Plymouth: Land adjoining the central station has been purchased for the purpose of erecting cottages for married firemen.

Ohakune: A site for the erection of a new fire-station has been purchased.

Wanganui: A site has been purchased, and a new central fire-station is in course of erection thereon.

Motor appliances :—

Auckland: A new 60 horse-power motor first-aid hose-and-ladder combination machine has been received and is now in commission.

Dunedin: For inspection purposes a 30 horse-power commercial motor-car has been purchased.

Greymouth: A 20 horse-power motor-chassis was purchased and fitted up as a combination chemical, hose, and ladder appliance.

Oamaru: A second-hand 40 horse-power chassis was purchased, and has been fitted up as a first-aid pump, hose, and ladder combination.

Whangarei: A 20 horse-power chassis has been purchased and fitted up as a hose-and-ladder tender.

Woolston: A first-aid double-action plunger-pump, having a discharging-capacity of 100 gallons per minute at 100 lb. pressure, has been fitted on the chemical and hose motor machine.

Casualties to civilians and firemen due to fires has been reported by Superintendents of brigades as having occurred in their respective districts as follows :—

Auckland.—10th February, 1920: Boardinghouse—two females badly burnt about face and arms due to explosion of Primus lamp. 24th April, 1920: Boardinghouse—male boarder burnt about face and arms. 29th April, 1920: Hotel—man employed as cook severely burned, and died in consequence.

Christchurch.—23rd August, 1919: Office buildings—man badly burnt and cut about hands and face, due to explosion of benzine. He was removed to the hospital, where he ultimately recovered. 26th October, 1919: Superintendent injured in both eyes, requiring attention of specialist, caused by being struck in the face by a jet of water.

Dunedin.—27th July, 1919: Boardinghouse—man found badly burned and unconscious: removed to hospital, where he died. The dead body of a second man badly charred was found later in bedroom. 14th August, 1919: Private dwelling—two men badly burnt about head and arms, due to benzine-explosion. 29th April, 1920: Railway-station—employee badly burnt about face and shoulders, due to gas-explosion. 27th June, 1920: Shed fire—fireman fell from beam, tearing a sinew in the leg and receiving some internal injury.