

permanent light has been established on the beacon on Haulashore Island, at the entrance to the harbour; and signals to indicate the depth of water at the entrance both by day and night have been established. These signals are shown by the lightkeepers from the flagstaff on the Boulderbank, near the lighthouse.

Considerable changes have taken place in the entrance to Manukau Harbour, and the beacons on the North Head have been altered to suit the changes. One of the beacons has been done away with, and, pending a proper trial with two beacons instead of three, the erection of the new beacons has been deferred. The buoys have been overhauled and cleaned by the "Hinemoa."

A return showing the licenses issued for the occupation of foreshore and the authorities given for the erection of wharves, &c., is appended hereto.

*Oyster-fisheries.*—An Act to amend "The Sea-fisheries Act, 1894," was passed by Parliament during last session, and provision was made in it to remedy the two defects in the law mentioned in my last report; that is, it has been made an offence to have oysters in possession, or sell them, during the close season, although they may have been actually taken from the beds during the open season; and provision was made to empower the Governor to fix the areas of foreshore to be included in oyster-bed leases. Several applications have been received for leases of the beds in Manukau Harbour, and steps are being taken to divide them into suitable areas. As soon as this has been done, the leases will be disposed of by public auction for a period of ten years. Applications for leases of the beds at Great Barrier and Waiheke Islands have been made by settlers at those places; but as the law now stands the owners or occupiers of adjoining lands can only obtain leases of beds by being the highest bidders at auction, or being the highest tenderers, as all leases are required to be disposed of by public auction or tender. One reason which settlers give for desiring to lease the beds adjoining their holdings is that some of the licensed pickers who now use them are in the habit of stealing their stock.

After careful inquiry as to the state of the beds in the North, it was decided to keep those in the Hauraki Gulf, Whangarei Harbour, and the southern subdivision of the northern oyster fishery closed for at least another season, as the oysters in them are not yet fit to be taken. The beds in the middle and northern subdivisions of the northern fishery—that is, those between the Waitangi River, in the Bay of Islands, and the North Cape—are therefore the only ones on the east coast of the Auckland District which are open this season; but it is considered that these beds and those in Kaipara Harbour which have been opened will be able to meet all requirements. Last season 7,654 sacks of oysters were taken from the middle and northern subdivisions of the northern district. Of this quantity, about 4,650 sacks were exported from the colony, and the balance used for home consumption. The Inspector, who has made a careful inspection of the beds, reports that they are in very good condition. As soon as the Manukau leases are disposed of the beds in that harbour will be available for taking oysters.

The following licenses to occupy foreshore for the purpose of forming artificial beds have been issued during the year: A. Maule, 48 acres, Pelorus Sound; P. Ewing, 4 acres, Hitaua Bay, Tory Channel; Duncan and Jones, 20 acres, Orongo Bay, Bay of Islands; Lane and Brown, 20 acres, Wahapu Bay, Bay of Islands.

During the year petitions were received from oyster-dealers, -pickers, and others in Auckland and Wellington, praying that the export of rock-oysters from the colony might be prohibited; but, as it appeared that this would only restrict the taking of oysters without there being any necessity for it, the request was not acceded to.

On the 11th April, 1895, D. McBrierty and J. Williamson were each fined £1 and costs for taking oysters in Manukau Harbour, in which the beds were closed. On the 17th of the same month Ernest Peel was fined £1 and costs for taking oysters in a closed district. The boat and gear used in committing the offence, which were forfeited under the provisions of "The Sea-fisheries Act, 1894," were returned to him on his paying a further sum of £1. On the 23rd April, 1895, R. Angelo was fined £1 and costs for taking oysters in Manukau Harbour.

On the 2nd December last, two days after the oyster season closed, a quantity of oysters were seized in shops in Wellington, but proceedings were not taken against the owners. It was not considered advisable to do so, as the provision of the law allowing oysters to be sold for fourteen days after the season closed, provided they were taken in the open season, was only repealed by "The Sea-fisheries Act Amendment Act, 1895."

*Sea-fisheries.*—Representations having been made to the department that it was necessary for the protection of mullet that the close season, which only applied to a portion of Kaipara Harbour, should be extended to include the whole of that harbour, this was done, after inquiry had been made into the matter. After the issue of the order prescribing the close season, it was strongly urged that there was no real necessity for it, and that, if it were kept in force, the mullet-canning industry would be very injuriously affected. Sir James Hector was therefore asked to proceed to Kaipara to make inquiry as to the necessity or otherwise for the close season. After taking evidence on the spot, he advised that the order should be revoked, and that the original close season for only a portion of the harbour should be reverted to; and his advice was given effect to. Sir James afterwards made another visit to Kaipara, and also went to other places in the North, to make further inquiries as to the necessity for a close season for mullet, and the proper period for such season. As soon as his report is received the whole matter will be dealt with. It having been reported that the Natives at Kaeo were taking undersized mullet, the Inspector of Fisheries at Russell was sent to the place to look into the matter. He warned the Natives that they must discontinue the practice, and they promised to do so.

Regulations have been made allowing the use, in the Provincial District of Canterbury, of hand whitebait nets, with an opening of nine square feet.

A request was made by the Patea Harbour Board that net-fishing should be prohibited in the Patea River; but, after making inquiries into the matter, it was not deemed advisable to accede to this request.