

The strength of the district on the 31st March last was forty-eight of all ranks and fifteen troop horses, distributed over twenty-eight stations. The casualties for the year were: One constable discharged on compensation, being medically unfit for further service; one district constable's services dispensed with, one constable dismissed, one sergeant and one constable drowned while endeavouring to reach Clive to rescue people in danger during heavy flood, one Native constable died.

The promotions in the ranks of constables made in the beginning of this year have given great satisfaction to the men concerned, and I have no doubt will be a stimulus to increased energy and zeal in the discharge of their duties.

The Hawke's Bay District received a very severe check by the disastrous floods which swept over the plains on the 16th April, 1897, resulting in the drowning of twelve persons, and enormous damage by the sweeping away and wrecking of houses, bridges, roads, &c., and the loss of the settlers' crops, cattle, &c. The silt deposited over the land averaged from 1 ft. to 3 ft., and it will probably be some years before the district recovers its wonted prosperity. Amongst the twelve drowned were Sergeant F. O'Donovan and Constable A. Stephenson of Napier Station, who with eight others left in two boats at the request of an urgent message from Clive asking for assistance. They were both exceptionally steady and conscientious men, and respected by all, and their death was a great loss to the service.

I am glad to say that the widows and orphans of all those drowned while on rescue work have been liberally provided for out of a relief fund by the purchase of annuities, the widows receiving 12s. 6d. per week, and each child 5s. per week until they attain the age of fourteen years.

The majority of the stations are in good order, but some will require additions and repairs during the current year.

INSPECTOR F. MCGOVERN, WANGANUI AND WEST COAST.

In reply to your Circular No. 9 of the 12th instant, I beg to transmit my annual report upon the state of the Wanganui and West Coast Police District for the year ended the 31st March, 1898:—

The strength of the Force in the district is one Inspector, three sergeants, thirty-two constables, and one district constable.

I regret to say that the Natives in the Taranaki portion of the district have been very troublesome during the year, and caused the police considerable hardship and worry by their illegal acts in ploughing up settlers' land and quarrelling amongst themselves over land and fences.

In the early part of September last, the old Pihama land dispute between Te Whiti's and Tohu's followers cropped up. They commenced by burning down each other's fences, and had it not been for the timely interference and tact of the constables in the district, they would have burned down houses and whares, and have caused bloodshed. In the same month a similar dispute took place at Pungarehu, which led to the arrest of a Native man and two women.

In the early part of October, a number of Natives commenced ploughing Europeans' land at a place known as Waihi, some six miles from Waitara, and although a number of them were arrested, they kept up the ploughing in different parts and in isolated places until the middle of November. This caused the police to be on the alert night and day, and no sooner was one batch arrested than another lot started ploughing in a different direction. There is no doubt but Te Whiti was the cause of all this trouble. I am, however, hopeful that after the firm manner in which the Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr. Stanford, dealt with the offenders, that the ploughing is at an end. The influence of Te Whiti and Tohu seems to be as great as ever over the minds of the majority of the Natives along this Coast, particularly between the White Cliffs and Patea, extending on beyond Mokau, but in a lesser degree.

In the month of November last a Native named Enoka murdered his wife at Parihaka. He was captured by Police the next morning after the murder, committed for trial, and sentenced to death at the late sitting of the Supreme Court, New Plymouth.

No other cases of crime requiring special mention occurred in the district during the year.

The number of offences reported was 1,015, showing an increase of twenty-eight. This increase is due to the Natives' ploughing.

The population of the district is rapidly increasing, and the townships growing larger, particularly Stratford, Hawera, Eltham, Opunaki, and New Plymouth.

The illegal traffic in sly-grog selling is still carried on to a certain extent between Ohingaiti, Karioi, &c. This is a very isolated portion of the district, but I am confident the Wanganui Police will soon stamp it out.

The discipline of the Force in the district has been good and Police duties have been satisfactorily carried out.

INSPECTOR P. PENDER, WELLINGTON AND MARLBOROUGH.

In compliance with Circular No. 9/98 of the 12th ultimo, I have the honour to furnish the following report upon the Force in the Wellington Police District for the year ending the 31st of March last. On that date the strength of the Force was,—one Inspector, one sergeant-major, eight sergeants, eighty constables, four detectives, three district constables, and one matron, distributed at thirty-one stations.

No new stations have been opened during the year, and none closed.

The only casualties during the year have been,—one constable dismissed, one sergeant discharged on compensation, and one acting-sergeant-major died.

The conduct of the men on the whole has been good, and very few punishments have been necessary.