

Waiotapu Plantation—

Average daily number prisoners employed during the year, 23·45.

Average daily number prisoners employed since camp started, 27·27.

	Value during Year, 1910-11.			Value since Camp started, 1904 to 1911.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Clearing land for tree-planting	310	10	0	5,600	4	3
Pitting	586	14	6	6,270	19	10
Tree-planting	858	3	0	5,773	11	2
Roadmaking	5	19	0	491	19	10
Fencing	399	2	8
Buildings, new erections and alterations to ..	42	13	6	340	12	10
Formation of fire-breaks, &c.	80	0	0	431	7	6
General upkeep of plantation	380	11	1	2,870	1	2
General repairs	125	16	0	137	16	6
Totals	£2,390	7	1	£22,315	15	9

Judging from the results obtained in the plantations, prison labour is a decided success, and an extension of this system would be advantageous, provided the prisoners were available. Both the prison camps in this district have during the year been somewhat short of men, and it has been necessary to employ more free labour in order to get the work accomplished.

The prison camp at Waiotapu will be shifted about next November to a new site on the Kaingaroa Plains, where a large block of land has been reserved for afforestation purposes. Preparations for this are now under way, and include the formation of a paddock, the procuring of a water-supply, and the preparation of a site for the camp. The telephone-line is four miles distant from the site chosen for the camp, which will necessitate the laying of a branch line for that distance. Very few places exist on these vast plains where water can be obtained in any quantity, so that in choosing a site for the prison camp almost every other consideration was subordinate to the question of an adequate supply of water. This, fortunately, has been procured about half a mile from one of the small experimental plantations formed on the plains some twelve years ago. Portion of this plantation will be felled for a camp-site, but it is intended to leave sufficient trees to provide shelter from the cold winds.

When commenting upon the question of shifting the prison camp in last annual report, it was suggested that in order to avoid shifting camp so frequently a central camp should be formed, with small outlying camps a few miles distant from the central camp, but the apparent difficulty of selecting a sufficient number of prisoners who are suitable for tree-planting camps rules this suggestion out as undesirable. Such a scheme would be possible only if the camp could be kept up to the full strength continually.

"KARERE" CONVALESCENT CAMP.

This camp, which was established for the purpose of giving healthy employment to convalescent consumptive patients, has not been as successful as was anticipated, owing chiefly to the difficulty in finding suitable work for such persons. The planting of trees can perhaps be performed as well by a convalescent consumptive as by a healthy individual, but this work lasts only about five months of the year, and the difficulty mentioned was experienced in providing a sufficiently light employment for them during the remainder of the year. Clearing land and digging pits were tasks which but few of the men could perform, and, as these compose the principal works undertaken on the plantations during the summer months, it was necessary to close the camp towards the latter part of the year.

The land available for tree-planting is every year becoming farther away from the camp, and if the employment of this labour is to be continued it will be necessary to shift the camp nearer to the work. One of the chief causes for grumbling has been the long walk to and from work, but this could not be avoided.

THINNING PLANTATIONS.

Some of the oldest parts of the plantations will soon require attention by way of thinning; and, in anticipation of this, it may be as well to touch upon this question generally. To what extent a plantation should be thinned depends very much upon the object aimed at in forming the plantation. A plantation subjected to severe thinning, or one formed with a wide distance between the trees, would produce timber full of knots, while the annual rings would be wide apart, thus causing coarseness of grain, which, in a coniferous tree particularly, is undesirable. Trees planted close together and grown until maturity with a complete leaf-canopy produce timber fine in grain and free from knots. The severity of the thinnings or the frequency of same has, therefore, a large influence upon the quality of the article produced. A quick return can be got from a plantation by the first method but the produce is low in quality.

By way of experiment a small area of the larch-plantation at Whakarewarewa was last year cleaned, by removing all the dead bracken and other *débris*, in order to better enable observations as to the rate of growth of the trees to be made. These trees were planted in 1901, and although many of the lateral branches within 6 ft. of the ground were dead and could be broken off clean to the trunk of the tree, there was a large number of branches which still had life in them, and when broken off left a small jagged end, which, if left, would cause a defect in the timber, and probably an entrance for a disease affecting the trees. The cost of trimming off these branches close to the trunk made it apparent that the thinning of the whole plantation should be deferred for a while longer, because the work could be more economically performed if such growth could be knocked off with the back of a slasher.