

Auckland shipmasters have urged that a light should be erected on the top of the Big King, but as this is 995 ft. high, and five miles from the danger, a light there would be enveloped in fog whenever it was foggy, and would therefore be of no use when most wanted. A design for a lighted buoy to be moored off the Western King has been submitted to the Department by the Acetone Illuminating and Welding Company (Limited), and this is under consideration. There is also a proposal to instal a wireless apparatus on the Big King to indicate to a ship her position by means of a wireless compass on board. Full information regarding the use and utility of this instrument is now being obtained. The Marine Engineer has just visited the Western King, but his report is not yet to hand.

The tower for a new light on Karori Rock, in Cook Strait, is now in course of construction, but the work is very slow owing to frequent and continued southerly seas which impede the work. The lantern and acetone-acetylene apparatus have been procured, but one case has gone astray in the course of shipment from Sweden. Steps have been taken to get the missing part duplicated, and it is anticipated that it will be here by the time the tower is completed.

A track has been constructed from the landing-place to the site for the proposed light on Channel Island at the southern entrance to the Hauraki Gulf, and the site prepared; the necessary iron tower has been built in Auckland, and the automatic acetone-acetylene apparatus has been procured. It is proposed to erect the tower and install the light at an early date.

A light on Flat Rock, in the Hauraki Gulf, would be of considerable value to shipping, and it is proposed to make the necessary provision on this year's estimates.

Incandescent apparatus for eight more lighthouses has been procured from England, and eight of the lights which at present have oil-burners will be converted into incandescent lights as soon as the Department's expert, who is now engaged on the erection of the Karori Rock Lighthouse, can be spared from that work.

Steps are being taken to obtain automatic acetone-acetylene lights for Nelson and Ponui Passage Lighthouses. When these are installed there will be better lights, and the salaries of three keepers will be saved.

During the year I have inspected the lighthouses at Castle Point, Portland Island, East Cape, Cuvier Island, Ponui Passage, Tiritiri, Mokohinou, Cape Brett, Cape Maria van Diemen, Kaipara, Godley Head, Akaroa Head, Moeraki, Tairaroa Head, Cape Saunders, Nugget Point, Waipapapa Point, Dog Island, Centre Island, Puysegur Point, Cape Foulwind, and the Brothers. These stations were found to be in good order, but new dwellinghouses are required at Tiritiri, as the present ones are very old.

During the year one Principal Keeper retired on superannuation, two Principals died, one Principal and five assistant keepers resigned; one assistant was transferred to the s.s. "Hine-moa," one to the Railway Department, and one to the service of the Auckland Harbour Board, the lights under his charge being transferred to the Board at the same time. Four assistant keepers were promoted to be Principals, and twelve new appointments of assistant keepers were made to fill the vacancies caused by the promotion and retirement of assistants.

The necessary additions, repairs, &c., have been made at lighthouse-stations as usual.

Marine Store.

A contract has been let for the erection of a new store for the Department on the new reclaimed land near the King's Wharf, and the building is, in fact, nearly completed. As soon as it is finished one of the present stores on the site near the railway-line will be moved to the site where the new store is being erected, as the Railway Department requires the land on which the stores at present stand.

Fog-signals.

The explosive fog-signals at Pencarrow Head, Godley Head, and Cuvier Island have been kept in good working-order. As it became dangerous to go down and up the old track to the signal at Godley Head owing to falling pieces of rock, it was decided to make a new track. This has been done, and a shorter as well as a safer track has been provided.

In 1911 this Department provided and erected a fog-signal at Patiti Point, Timaru, the Timaru Harbour Board undertaking to maintain it. Its use by the Board was discontinued on the 31st December last, and the signal has been handed back to the Department, which proposes to erect it at Stephen's Island.

The amount of light dues collected during the year was £41,745 12s. 4d., as compared with £41,406 7s. 4d. during the previous year.

Harbours.

The work of cleaning and painting the buoys in the harbours under the control of this Department, and overhauling their moorings and renewing them when necessary, has been done by the s.s. "Hine-moa." On the 9th January last the beacon which carried the Wigham light in the Helensville River, Kaipara Harbour, was knocked over through the s.s. "Wairua" colliding with it. It was then found that the piles had been riddled by the teredo. A new beacon has been erected, and the light has been replaced on it. Steps are being taken to place a lighted buoy at Beacon Beach, on the Wairoa River. A contract for the necessary buoy was recently let, and the required light apparatus is being procured.

In Hokianga Harbour a new landing-stage and a horse-landing have been constructed at Kohukohu; obstructions are being removed from the Taheke River; sunken logs have been removed from the Waihou River; and the work of constructing a proper breastwork round the