

Particulars relating to the distribution of pensioners throughout the Dominion; to the number payable at each rate; and to their ages and original nationality will be found in the appendix.

Payments.—The gross payments on account of widows' pensions for the year amounted to £31,619 being an increase of £4,542 on the figures of the previous year. After deducting refunds amounting to £7 and allowing for the adjustment of outstanding payments, the net charge against the Consolidated Fund for the year stands at £31,610.

The cost per head of the European population was 7d.

The gross payments in each year to date have been as follows:—

	£
1911-12 (two months)	1,963
1912-13	22,114
1913-14	27,077
1914-15	31,619
Total	<u>£82,773</u>

The instalments absolutely forfeited during the year amounted to £147 18s.

The instalments not collected within the time allowed by law, but subsequently specially authorized and paid during the year, numbered 219, the amount represented being £343.

MILITARY PENSIONS.

Pensions in Force.—The number of pensioners under this head on the 31st March, including 283 Maoris, was 1,388, being an increase of 148 on the figures of the previous year, thus:—

	Europeans.	Maoris.	Total.
New grants	81	175	256
Deduct deaths	88	20	108
Increase			<u>148</u>

The annual liability in regard to this class of pension at the close of the year was £49,968.

The total deaths to date number 191, including 23 Maoris. There has been 1 cancellation.

It will be observed that the number of deaths among Europeans during the year outnumbered the new pensioners, and taking this fact into consideration with the experience of that portion of the current year already passed, wherein the figures relating to both Europeans and Maoris show a falling tendency, it seems to be almost established that finality has been reached, and that the usual vote under this head will be a decreasing one. This would, of course, be in keeping with the decision arrived at by Cabinet, fixing the last date for the lodging of applications for the New Zealand War Medal as the 30th June last; but I have no information to guide me as to what extent the roll is likely to be affected by the decisions arrived at in regard to the outstanding claims for medal, the investigation of which was some time ago placed in the hands of a Commission consisting of veteran officers of the Maori wars. Up to date, I have been advised by the Defence authorities of the issue by them, since the passing of the Military Pensions Act in 1912, of 542 New Zealand War Medals, including 272 to Maoris. Of these, 233, including 173 to Maoris, were issued during the year ended the 31st March, last.

The total pensioners include 394 who were previously in receipt of the old-age pension. Altogether, 544 old-age pensioners have applied to have their pensions converted to military pensions, but of these 63 were found to be without proof of the award of the medal. The remaining 481, of whom 87 have since died, were granted the larger pension, the annual saving to the old-age pension vote on account of these being £11,903, as follows:—

	Number of Pensioners.	Annual Amount. £
At 31st March, 1913	380	9,422
1913-14	72	1,773
1914-15	29	708
Totals	<u>481</u>	<u>£11,903</u>

The age table in the appendix shows 48 military pensioners under the age of 65, while 149 are 80 and upwards, of whom 6 are 90 and over.

New Claims.—The claims lodged during the year numbered 241, as against 788 and 736 in the two preceding years.

The total claims lodged to date have been 1,765, of which number 1,580 have been established and 185 refused. Included amongst these were 359 claims from Maoris, of which 306 have been granted. Among the rejected applicants were 150 to whom no medal had been awarded, 6 deserters, 4 not qualified by residence, and 18 who had died. In all, there have been 1,906 inquiries regarding this class of pension.

Payments.—The gross payments under this head during the year totalled £47,616, being an increase of £18,169 on the total of the previous year. Making allowance for refunds amounting to £3 1s. 1d., and for several outstanding payments, the net charge against the Consolidated Fund was £47,607.

The cost per head of the European population was 10d.

The total amount now paid to date on account of military pensions stands at £80,744.

The instalments forfeited during the year amounted to £306.