

THE NAUTICAL ALMANAC AND TIDE-TABLES.

This publication for 1932 (thirtieth edition) was published on 1st November, so as to make it available in ample time before the end of 1931, for the use of vessels proceeding beyond New Zealand.

ADJUSTMENT AND INSPECTION OF SHIPS' COMPASSES.

The regulations for the adjustment of compasses have been carefully administered, and compasses have been maintained in a good state of efficiency. The results of the investigation of the adjustments required by the regulations show that the work of the Compass Inspectors and Adjusters has been satisfactorily performed. It has been necessary for the Compass Inspectors to exercise extra supervision in some cases, owing to the changes taking place in the magnetic forces affecting the compass.

SHIPPING CASUALTIES.

During the year casualties at or near our coasts varied considerably in their nature, and unfortunately were accompanied by loss of life.

The usual number of minor casualties by stranding, fires, collision with wharves, &c., continue to occur, and preliminary inquiries into them have been held by departmental officers when such was considered necessary.

The circumstances attendant on some of the casualties warranted Magisterial inquiries being held, into the loss of the m.v. "Kotiti," which foundered with the loss of seven lives; the loss of the "Progress," which was wrecked at Ohiro Bay, with the loss of four lives; the stranding of the "Port Hobart" off Turakirae; the stranding of the "Kini" near Bare Island; the stranding of the "Breeze" in Gore Bay, and the stranding of the "Storm" near Akaroa.

NOTICES TO MARINERS.

Information relative to changes in navigational aids, and to the discovery of obstructions, wreckage, or other dangers to navigation, and information of general interest to mariners, have been published in the form of Notice to Mariners.

Fifty-two such notices were issued during the year, and distributed locally and to countries which reciprocate such matters.

ADMIRALTY CHARTS.

The stock of Admiralty charts kept by the Department is still being increased as the demand necessitates. To ensure that purchasers receive these charts corrected to date, many corrections, due to the alteration or information affecting navigation, have been made to them here during the year. The importance of procuring up-to-date charts cannot be too strongly urged on mariners, as the value of a chart used for navigation depends upon its showing a complete record of changes reported since its publication.

During recent years alterations to harbour-works, minor changes in navigational aids and other information, have been made which, through not being reported to the Hydrographer or to the Department, have resulted in some of the charts not agreeing with conditions existing at the port. In order to get the information necessary for the correction of charts, the Department requested Harbour Boards to supply the latest information, and, as a result, plans and charts were received for Auckland, Wellington, Lyttelton, Oamaru, Otago, Bluff, and Greymouth, and forwarded to the Hydrographer.

EXAMINATION OF MASTERS AND MATES.

The examinations have been held as usual in Wellington, Auckland, and Lyttelton, and conducted in accordance with the new regulations which came into force on the 1st January, 1931.

The new procedure of dividing the examination into signalling, written, and oral parts is working satisfactorily. It is a distinct improvement on the old system, and must be considered a definite advantage to candidates who have gained a partial pass, as they are required to pass only the remainder of the examination and not the whole of it, as was formerly the case.

The new examinations require candidates to have a much wider knowledge of their profession, and demand more consideration on many matters which formerly were committed to memory without an understanding of them. The navigation problems are modelled as near as possible on the every-day practice of navigation, and candidates are allowed to solve them by the methods which they have been accustomed to use, provided the principles are correct. Candidates, in the majority of cases, have presented themselves well prepared for examinations, and, in view of the changes made in the syllabus, have reached a higher standard than was expected.

The number of candidates shows a decrease from last year, which is no doubt due to junior unemployed officers, owing to the number of ships laid up, being unable to get an opportunity to serve the time necessary for their higher certificate.

During the year fifty-eight examinations were held, of which four were for signalling, three for compass syllabus, two for yacht-master in New Zealand waters, and one for certificate of efficiency in navigation for the R.N.V.R. The percentage of passes for certificates of competency was 46.8, a slight increase on last year. The percentage of total failures was only 27.7, the remaining 25.5 being partial passes.

SIGHT-TEST EXAMINATIONS.

A total of forty-three sight-test examinations was held at Auckland, Wellington, and Lyttelton: of this number one candidate failed in the lantern test, and one in the letter test.