

APPENDIX C.

Extracts from the Report of Mr. BAKER, Chief Surveyor, Canterbury, to the Surveyor-General.

Sectional Surveys.

"Although I have given due prominence to the necessity of putting applicants in possession of their boundaries at the earliest possible dates, I regret that I could not get as much progress made as I could have desired, owing, (1st) to the want of the necessary reliable triangulation; (2nd), to the accumulation of unplotted work from previous years, which prevented, and, in some districts, still hinders me from going on with these Surveys, having no plots of the work already done, and (3rd), to the changes which, with your concurrence, I have found it necessary to make in the staff.

Considering these drawbacks, I may venture to hope that the progress made will be deemed satisfactory.

In all 2444 sections, containing 350,483 acres have been surveyed, and the plans properly drawn, with tabulated meridian distances, are in the office and, when checked and recorded, the Crown Grants can be at once issued.

Of the area completed, 1,100 sections, equal to 230,986 acres, have been surveyed by contract, at an average cost of 8d per acre; 1,344 sections, containing 119,497 acres, being done by the staff officers at a cost of 1s. 6½d. per acre; of course, between the relative cost of the staff and contract work no comparison can fairly be instituted; the sections done by the staff officers being often isolated, and involving much more loss of time in doing them and making the necessary trig. connections; for instance, the work on the peninsula surveyed by the staff costs from 1s. 1d. to 9s. 4½d. per acre, owing to the heavy bush cutting and intricate road traverses. One group of 10 sections, containing only 2,140 acres, done by Mr. Brodrick, necessitating, owing to the road traverses, no less than 730 pegs being driven, the position of each being duly recorded and shown on the plan, averaging 73 pegs to each section.

On the other hand, the surveys done by the contractors are of considerable areas, nearly all in open country, and generally contiguous. The former contract price for this latter work was 1s. 3d. per acre; the plans to be completed by the office."

Arrears of Unplotted Surveys.

"Shortly after I took charge of this department I reported to you the enormous arrears of sections returned as surveyed, but not plotted, or only partially so, and for which it was impracticable to issue Crown Grants. Since then I have had proper sectional record books prepared, and returns made of all sections surveyed, but unplotted; and I regret to state that these arrears are much greater than I at first supposed, as I have found sections surveyed in March, 1872, not yet plotted.

On the 1st January, 1877 there were, so far as I can judge, not less than 4,725 sections, containing 437,674 acres, returned as surveyed, but which were unplotted. It is necessary to call your attention to this matter, as the plotting of these arrears causes an immense amount of work, both in the Christchurch and Timaru offices. There is no clear index in the field books by which these sections can be traced, and the field notes are so imperfect that it often takes an officer days to elucidate and plot a survey which should be done in a few hours. Several of the surveyors who did the work had left the staff and the country before I joined the department, so that no reference could be made to them.

Two of my most experienced officers have been engaged nearly continuously on this work, 2,072 sections, containing 193,317 acres, having been plotted and the areas calculated; in addition, Mr. Wright at Timaru has also 954 sections, equal to 70,268 acres, plotted, but the area not yet determined.

Of these arrears there remain to be plotted, therefore, 1,699 sections, embracing 194,089 acres, of which I estimate that at least 50,000 acres will require revision in the field.

Referring to the old contracts, 1,013 sections, containing 154,721 acres, of the Messrs. Sealey, in South Canterbury, have been plotted by Mr. Wright, who states that "the work plots very fairly, but the compilation on the block sheets shows that, as a rule, the measurements are somewhat long, when applied to the trig. survey." The balance of this contract amounting only to about 13,000 acres has also been plotted, but, although many of the sections close in themselves, their position is doubtful, and they have, therefore, been returned to Mr. H. Sealey for revision. The Messrs. Sealey have given every assistance, and if any line was at all doubtful have at once gone into the field to revise their work.

Of Mr. Bain's contract I cannot report favorably, although only about 68,000 acres in extent, but costing £6,919; it has been in progress for more than 5 years, not one third of the work being yet plotted. The field books in many places are nearly unintelligible, and some of the surveys having been done by incompetent assistants. A large proportion is quite unreliable.

I regret to have to make such unfavorable comments, but it is only fair to myself to state that the time unavoidably absorbed in the endeavour to clear up this old work is very great; in fact, in some instances, having no plots to guide me to what has been done on the ground, I am quite unable to go on with new surveys.

The urgent necessity of keeping the staff officers engaged in placing new purchasers in possession of their boundaries has prevented me having this work—and some done by staff officers, which is equally unreliable—revised, or rather re-surveyed; the latter method will, I am compelled to state, be the cheaper and most effective in the majority of the cases in question.

I do not enter into the matter of these unplotted arrears with any intention of implying censure on the officers who formerly had charge of the plotting in the Christchurch and Timaru offices. In my opinion they had infinitely more work than they could be expected to overtake; the consequence being that, whenever any difficulty arose in the plotting of a survey, owing to some error on the part of the surveyor or other cause, the plots were put aside to be cleared up at some future time, when the surveyor