

The total area of Native Land Court blocks (including the above) surveyed is 85,825 acres, at a cost of £705 15s. 6d., secured by lien on the lands. Pending more satisfactory arrangements as to recouping the sums advanced on surveys of this nature, I have not considered it advisable to undertake surveys for the Natives except in particular cases. The cost of survey, therefore, of lands for the purpose of the Native Land Court during the past season (exclusive of Land Purchase blocks) has been borne by private individuals, and the work done by authorized surveyors. The area thus surveyed, and the maps received, is 251,443 acres, in 112 blocks, the whole of which has to be checked and recorded in this and the Gisborne office. The cost per acre of these surveys I have no means of arriving at; but feel sure that it is very great, and a heavy burden to the owners. There are many reasons which make it certain that, if the Government had the power of taking *all* these surveys into their own hands, they could be done at once more accurately, and at half the cost involved in private surveys. One thing, however, is essential to this course, and that is, that the Natives themselves should define their own boundaries before the surveyor goes on to the ground, and thus eliminate one of the principal causes of expense now existing—viz., the delay involved in settling disputes arising out of contested boundaries.

LAND PURCHASE SURVEYS.

If to the area of Native lands surveyed at cost of Government and private individuals is added that shown under Land Purchase surveys, a total of 832,283 acres, in 179 blocks, will be shown as lands prepared for the work of the Native Land Court in this district, a large part of which remains adjudicated on. The area surveyed for the Land Purchase Department during last season has been very large—viz., 494,615 acres; out of which, 80,323 acres have been undertaken by surveyors specially engaged for the purpose, and paid for by that department at a cost of £1,614; whilst we have in hand at this time 123,000 acres, all of which is situated in the most broken, mountainous, and difficult part of this Island. A more than ordinary amount of hardship and privation has fallen to the lot of some of the surveyors engaged in this service, more especially Messrs. Martin and Spencer, whose work is situated in the densely-wooded and precipitous mountains of the East Cape. It is to be hoped that these surveys may be shortly finished, when the surveyors may be detailed to the much more remunerative work of preparing Crown lands for sale—a work which has been seriously retarded by five of the staff surveyors having been engaged for twelve months on the surveys for the Land Purchase Department.

GOLD-MINING SURVEYS.

One mining survey, of fifteen acres, represents the total work performed under this head.

ROADS.

A considerable mileage of roads has been surveyed during the year, amounting to 172½ miles, at a cost of £13 per mile, nearly the whole of which has been in exercise of the rights of road through lands granted under the Native Land Acts, and a considerable amount—30 miles—has been surveyed, so that the specifications for contracts could be got out, and for which tenders are now called. The whole mileage, I think, without any exception, has been laid out in conformity with Circular No. 59—i.e., the grades have been limited to one-fifteenth and one-tenth. In addition to the 54 miles surveyed by Mr. Cussen, he has checked and directed the survey of 40 miles more, as laid out by a Highway Board surveyor, in exercise of the road rights.

I have referred in detail in another report to the works of construction carried out by the department; so only note here that 17½ miles of road have been completed under votes for “opening up lands before sale.” The amount of work before us to exercise the rights under the Native Land Act is enormous, and will take many years to work off with the number of surveyors who can be spared for the purpose, whilst, at the same time, it is a matter of great urgency that it should be done at once, before settlers build, fence, or cultivate, and thus bring upon themselves the expense of altering their fences to suit roads which were not in existence when they commenced. A large number of roads also require to be surveyed before the rights lapse under Crown grants.

DETENTION BY NATIVE OPPOSITION.

Delays caused by Natives in opposing surveys have cost £360; but this scarcely represents the whole amount. Although the suspicion formerly excited by the erection of trig. stations has in a great measure disappeared, it occasionally crops up in a most annoying and vexatious manner. In the unsurveyed Native districts the only way to effectually stop this is not to allow any surveys until the triangulation is completed.

Under other work is included the cost of inspection and such smaller matters of survey as cannot be returned under an acreage heading. I regret that the important matter of field inspection is not carried out in my district to so full an extent as it should be. This has arisen during the past season from the necessity of withdrawing Messrs. Barnard and Hickson—but more especially the latter—from this service, to aid in carrying on the other branches of work required. The work of private surveyors in the Native Land Court surveys is that in which inspection is more especially required. But little has been done during the past season, excepting in Poverty Bay, owing to the cause stated.

LAND TRANSFER SURVEYS.

Although these are not made at the cost of Government, the record and checking of them, before being used as bases of titles by the District Land Registrar, forms an increasing portion of the duties of the office. During the year sixty-six plans have been passed, after being checked by the painstaking draughtsman, Mr. G. Sturtevant, in charge of this branch. I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without noticing the great readiness to comply with my requisitions shown by the private surveyors working under the Act, who, without exception, seem anxious to comply with the regulations made for their guidance.

The first attempt at a city standard survey, made last season, has proved to be of great utility; and every survey now made within its limits is correctly laid down on the 1-inch sheets. A small extension of the survey was made during the year by Mr. Hickson, in a part of the city where the old