

SETTLEMENT SURVEYS.

Of these 26,555 acres have been completed. The cost per acre is higher than last year, which is due to several causes: 1st. 25,000 acres of it is in heavily-timbered country, with an absence of triangulation. This means extra labour and care on the block-lines and circuit traverses, as the only safeguard against accumulating error lies in this. 2nd. There has been great loss of time during the wet season, some months showing but very little work. I think I may safely say that in the locality where the section work has been executed there have been at least three wet days to one nearer the coast. 3rd. 22,000 acres have been subdivided into small sections, averaging 74 acres each.

The sectional work on the Mountain Road is complete, and there is now an unbroken chain of settlement through the forest to the eastward of Mount Egmont from New Plymouth to Hawera. Having been careful in selecting land suitable for agricultural settlement, it is readily taken up as fast as our work is completed, and, for forest-land, realizes high prices.

TOWN SURVEYS.

The principal work under this head has been in connection with the laying-down standard marks in New Plymouth, Hawera, and Carlyle. These were found absolutely necessary for Land Transfer purposes, as nearly all original ones were gone, and, the surveys not having been executed with accuracy, disputes were constantly arising. Now all Land Transfer surveyors are enabled to comply with the regulations by connecting their work with these marks, which will prevent confusion and trouble in the future. The survey of Opunake and the village at Mangawhero has been the only sectional work under this head. The expense of the latter, which is in the forest, has necessarily been great.

NATIVE RESERVES, WAIMATE.

Three surveyors have been engaged on this work for the past two and a half months, at an expenditure of £490—the principal work done being the running the seaward boundary of the block set apart for reserves a distance of 13 miles, and two road-lines through it; also the cutting-out of two reserves comprising about 4,000 acres. All road-lines in this work appear in the return of field work under the head of "Roads;" but the other work, with the exception of 1,800 acres at Oeo, has been of such a miscellaneous nature that I have been unable to particularize it in the return. Services to the extent of £191 2s. 6d. have been rendered to the Public Works Department, mainly in connection with the road works by the Constabulary on the West Coast—a surveyor having been employed there laying out the roads, and occasionally engaged in levelling, for about eleven weeks.

INSPECTION.

During the year I have made twenty-four inspections, and in my field checks have retraversed 1,040 chains of different surveyors' work. In every instance save one (that of a Land Transfer surveyor) the tests applied proved most satisfactory; and I cannot speak too highly of the character of the work done. Closes are within 3 minutes, notwithstanding some of the circuits exceed 9 miles of traverse; and, in my retraverses, bearings in no instance vary a full minute—the greatest difference in our measurements on any work being only at the rate of 2·4 links per mile, the remainder far below. The surveyors are alive to the necessity of very great care in forest-country without triangulation, and are to be commended for the excellence of their work. It is only by the universal adoption of the steel band and wire that these results could be obtained; and there is no doubt that, in ordinary sectional work, at least, the chain should be considered a thing of the past.

The contemplated work for the ensuing year is the survey of the reserves for Natives on the West Coast, and extensive sectional surveys in the same locality. In prospect of these works I see no probability of any reduction in the expenditure, but rather a possible increase on that of last year.

THOMAS HUMPHRIES,
Chief Surveyor.

HAWKE'S BAY.

SECTIONAL SURVEYS.

The area surveyed for settlement is—by staff, 2,616 acres; by contractors, 60,742 acres. The cost of the section surveys varies from 4½d. for large blocks of pastoral land to 5s. per acre for two 40-acre sections of exceptionally difficult forest-country.

The settlement surveys in the Seventy-Mile Bush are not by any means in advance of the requirements of selectors: there need, I feel confident, be no apprehension that these lands will not be taken up within the course of the next two or three years. On instructions received from the Waste Lands Board, 42,544 acres in the Mohaka District have been laid off in large blocks, to be sold on deferred payments as pasture lands, for which purpose alone the country is suitable; but whether the blocks will go off at the present upset price of £1 per acre is very doubtful, more particularly so as the best sites for homesteadings and small paddocks have already been free-selected at 10s. an acre. The method which has been adopted in the settlement of bush-lands—namely, that of opening up the main roads before throwing open the sections for sale—bids fair to become a success, and is certainly the only way to permanently locate people on forest-lands. Recently a block of bush-land was thrown open: the block was hitherto unknown; but during the past year the block has been opened out by roads, the result being that 41 sections, representing an area of 1,763 acres, have been taken up. One township on the railway-line and a village settlement have been laid out.

Two contracts—one for the survey of 11,017 acres of applications, the other for 6,700 acres of settlement-survey—remain unfinished, and will have to be carried forward to next year's work.

ROAD SURVEYS.

The road surveys continue to tax the department, and are likely to do so for some years to come. Formerly, under the system adopted in Hawke's Bay for the settlement and sale of Crown lands, thousands of acres were taken up or surveyed for sale without first laying off the roads. The lands