

been merged in land purchased by Government, leaving a balance unpaid of £22,8 8 in the register of the office of the Native Land Court.

The applications for survey continue to come in, and such as are approved by the Court and the Government are passed on for survey. There are at present about 50 blocks, covering 398,473 acres, in hand and under disposal by the department.

ROAD SURVEYS.

The question of exercising the right of taking roads through Crown and Native lands within five years of the issue of the grant in the case of Crown lands, and within fifteen years in the case of Native lands, is one which frequently presses on the attention of the department. As stated in last year's report, the time has lapsed and is fast lapsing in many cases, and all that the department can hope to do is to take up the most urgent cases and dispose of them firstly. It would have been better had the Legislature allowed a longer period to select the road-lines, because in the case of many of the Native blocks especially little or nothing has been done towards their settlement, and the necessity of having to study a whole country-side for the purpose of intelligently selecting a road through an isolated block is, in a bush country, an expense and trouble apparently greater than the advantage to be gained, and a work which could very well be postponed in very many cases indefinitely, without detriment to any one. During the year 427 miles have been surveyed through blocks, and the selection and survey of roads is being continued in the various districts as circumstances permit.

PIONEER ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

In the preparation of Crown lands for future occupation the opening and formation of road-lines, especially in bush and hilly districts, is nearly as essential as the subdivisional survey.

The information furnished by the trigonometrical and topographical surveys of the levels of the country, of the nature of the valleys, and of the localities and extent of the fertile Crown lands, enables the selection of main lines of roads to proceed on an intelligent basis. In carrying on this important work the lines are graded, benched, and in most cases formed either as bridle- or dray-tracks. Until this is done the land cannot be said to be ready for the settler. Indeed, so important are these pioneer road-works to the opening out of the country and its future settlement, that the progress made in that direction will mainly depend on what is done in this way. During the past year 340 miles have been in progress of formation, at a cost of £35,935. These works are under the immediate charge of the officers of the Departments of Land, Survey, and Public Works, or of local bodies, as is found most convenient in the several districts. Reports giving details will be found in the Appendix. The operations during the current year will be in prosecution of works already in hand, and the keeping pace with the sectional survey of Crown lands in opening out more roads to give access to these lands as surveyed.

LAND-TRANSFER SURVEYS.

The surveys of private lands under the Land Transfer Act are all executed by private authorized surveyors. The duty of the department is to see that no plan is passed in as basis of title to be guaranteed by the Government until it has been carefully checked and examined, with the view of guarding against any overlap or double granting. As the subdivision of land in and around towns is frequently very minute, the check by distance and bearing from a known established point is, as already referred to under settlement surveys, the only satisfactory method of procedure. It will be unnecessary to repeat what has already been said in former annual reports about old imperfect surveys. But it may be said that during the last year, with the exception of the Nelson District, and one case in the Auckland District, nothing has occurred calling for special remark. In Nelson both the execution and records of some of the earlier surveys are very imperfect, and it would only be the beginning of trouble to allow certificates of title to issue in such cases in lieu of the old Crown grants, which, although quite satisfactory as holding titles, are too imperfect for dealing with under the land transfer. It