

Other Work.—This includes harbour-soundings and scattered work by Mr. W. H. Skinner, inspection of some Land Transfer surveys by Mr. Skeet, survey of some small *wahi-tapus* by Mr. Dalziell, inspection and taking-over by Mr. Bullard of portion of the East Road, surveyed by Mr. Finnerty through the Pohokura Block. Forty-nine Land Transfer survey plans, comprising 37,059 acres, in 152 sections, have been examined and passed, and the work of this branch is up to date.

Field Inspection.—The only instrumental field inspection made by me has been that of the Whitianga Block and reserves in the Opatu Block, situated on the Upper Wanganui, and surveyed by Mr. John Skinner on contract. The survey of the former consisted chiefly of triangulation, with ranging over the ridges between the stations. The work has been on the whole carefully done, and the ground-marking is good. With reference to the Opatu, I found the chainage where tested defective, which Mr. Skinner attributes to the breakage of one of his long wires, and to his omission to make the necessary final correction of some of the distances. I have also inspected some Land Transfer surveys in the Opunake District, and inspected the grades of roads and ground-marking of surveys in the Upper Waitotara by Mr. John Annabell, in the Waverley District by Mr. R. H. Davies, and in the Ngatimaru District by Mr. H. W. Climie and Mr. Murcott. While experience has taught that, unfortunately, field inspection is necessary to insure a good standard of work being maintained, it is also equally obvious that nothing like a thorough system of inspection can be carried out throughout the district by the Chief Surveyor alone while so much of his time is taken up in his capacity of Crown Lands Commissioner, since for several years past the administrative portion of his duties has been overtaking the professional portion. This being so, it is a question whether more expedition and accuracy could not be secured by the abolition of the contract system, a system which must necessarily lead to the employment of surveyors over whom the department has little or no control, as all authorised surveyors possess more or less private practice, which it is unreasonable to suppose they will give up for the sake of an occasional contract. Consequently, when they receive a contract they are compelled to employ assistants—not always authorised—to carry out the work, with an occasional visit from themselves, the result being in some cases that roads are not laid out where and in the manner in which they should be, that serious delays occur, and consequently the settlement of the land is retarded.

Office-work.—The Chief Draughtsman, Mr. Bird, reports that the office staff has checked 28 surveyors' plans, compiled 12 plans, made 257 tracings, checked 195 traverse-sheets, drawn 6 tracings for photolithographing, put plans in triplicate upon 209 Crown grants and leases, representing an area of 38,711 acres, and on 332 certificates of title in triplicate, dealing with 79,479 acres. I may here mention that the office-work has increased in every direction very considerably during the past two years—for instance, the correspondence for the last nine months is more than double what it was for the whole of the year 1888–89.

Work of Next Year.—The bulk of the work will no doubt be the survey of the numerous small-farm association blocks, which at present comprise an area of about 83,000 acres. The survey of the Milsom, Tanner, and Oxford blocks should be completed within two or three months, but, unless two or more surveyors are put on to each of the larger blocks—viz., the Terrace End and Palmerston—we cannot expect to have them completed by the end of the year. All the staff, with the exception of Mr. Bullard, who is laying out roads under warrant, will be engaged on settlement surveys. Mr. Turner expects to complete the grading with magnetic traverse of the twenty miles of road-line up the Whenuakura Valley by the end of May, when his services will, I hope, be available for either more road-work or section survey.

I regret to have again to state that, with the increasing demand for land, it is quite impossible for the present office staff to keep pace with the work which is coming in. Not only are we not overtaking any of the long-outstanding arrears, but the checking of the surveyors' plans goes on very slowly, which is a considerable hardship upon contract surveyors. To keep pace with even the current work, either the staff will have to be increased or we shall have, as a last resource, to relax our present rigorous system of examination, whereby every co-ordinate is mathematically checked, and all opposite sides of roads are computed. I shall be very loth to have to do this, as in the absence of systematic field inspection it is our only safeguard against large errors remaining undetected and becoming embodied in Crown titles; but there appears to be no alternative. I desire again to place on record the continued industry and zeal of all the officers of this branch of the department.

SIDNEY WEETMAN, Chief Sureyor.

HAWKE'S BAY.

Minor Triangulation.—The triangulation of 40,878 acres has been completed during the season at a cost of £145 1s., an average rate of four-fifths of a penny an acre. A considerable amount of subsidiary work has been done in connection with the various settlement surveys, but the foregoing is all that has been continuous, and can fairly be brought under this head.

Topographical Survey for Selection under Act of 1887.—8,690 acres in the Motu and Waikaremoana Districts have been prepared for selection under this system, at the low cost 4½d. an acre. In connection with it, nine miles of road in rough forest country were located and traversed, the cost of which is included. Over 100,000 acres in the Motu, Waikohu, and Nuhaka North Districts are now being operated upon in the same manner, and a large portion will be ready to be thrown open for selection about July next.

Rural and Suburban.—Fifty-eight sections, comprising 36,551 acres, have been surveyed at a cost of £1,318 13s. 4d., a rate of 9½d. an acre. The skeleton survey of the greater part of this has been returned in previous years as topographical survey for selection under the Land Act of 1887. Taking into account the expenditure of this preliminary survey, the total cost from first to last on the area returned for the past nine months is a small fraction over 1s. an acre.