

904 sections, the average size throughout being about 169 acres. The bulk of the work was executed by twelve staff and two contract surveyors, all in heavy forest country. This work finishes up several large pieces of country that have been on hand for settlement in various stages for the past three or four years.

On the East Coast, for instance, the pegging and mapping of the Rising Sun and Pahiatua Nos. 1 and 2 Farm Homestead Blocks completes the sectional survey of the whole of the East Puketoi country of about 90,000 acres. The roading and settlement of this territory, you will remember, formed the subject of one of my first reports to you when I took charge of this district in 1891. I then recommended its being cut up into areas suitable for ordinary settlement. The demand, however, for farm homestead settlement blocks subsequently necessitated its being surveyed into 200-acre sections, which, of course, has vastly increased the length of roading, as compared with my original proposals, and necessarily took longer to complete.

Coming to the West Coast, Mr. Dickie's survey of the Marton No. 1 and 2 Blocks, and part of the Onslow Block, completes the farm homestead lands, as well as those taken up under ordinary conditions, in all that stretch of country extending from the Upper Pohangina on the south to the Awarua Block on the north, taking in all the available land fit for settlement between the Rangitikei River and the Ruahine Ranges on the east.

Again, in the Pohoriatane Block, Messrs. Bristed, McKay, and Maitland have cleared off the Hunterville Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Blocks (farm homestead settlements), besides doing adjoining Native surveys, and roads leading to the areas being taken up. Also, in the Waimarino country, Messrs. Dunnage, C. A. Mountfort, and Lewis's surveys clear off in the interior all the farm homestead settlement blocks, except the Gladstone and Marton Nos. 3 and 4. The field-work of the Gladstone and Marton No. 4 is practically finished, and Marton No. 3 is well in hand by Mr. C. A. Mountfort. Therefore the farm homestead blocks completed as above during the year are: Rising Sun, Danevirke-Centennial, Pahiatua Nos. 1 and 2, Marton Nos. 1 and 2, Onslow, Waimarino, Wanganui-United (East and West), Clifton No. 2, Hunterville Nos. 1 and 2, and Malton, together with nearly all the selection surveys adjoining any of these associations.

*Township Surveys.*—These comprised an area of 134 acres, subdivided into 310 allotments, at an average cost of 21s. 4d. each, the principal surveys being at Mangaweka, Taihape, and Ohakune. The cost is somewhat higher than usual, but is accounted for by the hindrance caused by fallen timber, and bad weather being experienced whilst Mangaweka (which comprises the bulk of the area) was being done. Raetihi Township extension has also been completed by Mr. C. A. Mountfort; but plans were not sent in in time to be included, and consequently the survey is not returned this year.

*Road Surveys.*—These amounted in the gross to 137 miles, at a cost of £13 9s. per mile, as against 157 miles last year, at £16 14s. 2d. The principal items were Mr. Thompson's surveys of 38½ miles in South Wairarapa, in settled districts; Mr. Otway's of 15½ miles, inland from Castlepoint, to connect with our road systems in the country further back; 14½ miles by Mr. W. D. B. Murray of the Main Inland Road; and over 32 miles of engineering work by various surveyors, refunds for which have of course been asked from their respective road votes.

*Native Land Court Surveys.*—The work undertaken by the department for Native Land Court purposes was 76,702 acres, in ten blocks, at an average cost of 5s. 4d. per acre. These included a contract for five blocks, containing 68,114 acres, east of the Wanganui River, in which the Native Land Purchase Office was interested, and was let to Messrs. Richardson and Reardon. The only other item of importance was the survey of two of the Waimarino Reserves by Mr. Dalziell, having an area of 7,485 acres, and several others are in progress. Mr. Otway has also completed three other large reserves on the Wanganui River, entailing some very hard and arduous work on his part, as well as on the part of Mr. Dalziell, the surveys being in the most outlying portions of the district. It must also be borne in mind that these surveys form but a small portion of the year's Native Land Court operations, as plans from private surveyors have been checked and examined (and in some cases checked in the field before being passed) of 114 blocks, representing an area of 104,000 acres. It is needless, of course, to remind you that this class of work is far more troublesome than that done directly by the department, from want of immediate control, and involves questions of authorisation, inspection, &c., and liens to protect the surveyors' costs.

*Other Work.*—Classed in this category is all the miscellaneous work that cannot well come under the headings of Form No. 1 of the annual return. These total up to £2,013 1s. 10d. The chief items are Mr. L. Smith's inspections and other costs, amounting to £560 4s. 1d.; Mr. W. D. B. Murray's expenditure of £646 2s. 8d., which, from its nature, I had no option but to bring under this heading; Mr. Lowe's supervision, &c., of the inland and other roads for Mr. Road-surveyor Murray, at a cost of £145 17s. 11d.; and Mr. Lewis's work of a similar character in Waimarino, &c., cost £221 2s. 7d.; whilst Mr. Thompson's amount of £150 is chiefly for reports and explorations of Crown lands, Ranger's duties, river-bed surveys, &c. These five items thus account for £1,723 7s. 3d. of the total of £2,013 1s. 10d.

*Survey Inspections.*—Mr. L. Smith, in addition to having tested, up to date, nearly the whole of the staff surveyors' work in the field, has also made twelve inspections of the surveys of private surveyors, the result of his labours going to prove that, taken as a whole, the work of the staff, with one exception, is satisfactory both as regards accuracy and cost of output, and that notwithstanding the fact that many of the surveyors have been working under great disadvantages, on account of the rough nature of the country and the remoteness from settlement, involving in some instances the packing of supplies long distances.

Regarding the work of private surveyors, although the better class of men turn out exceptionally good surveys, there are others that show the necessity for very close inspection before allowing their plans to pass.

*Road-works.*—You are already in possession of Captain Turner's very comprehensive report, giving all the details in connection with the year's operations and expenditure under this heading,