

OTAGO.

Rural and Suburban.—The total area surveyed under this heading for the year ending the 31st March is 8,664 acres, into ninety-five sections, at an average cost of 2·03s. per acre. Mr. Langmuir was absent for five months during the year assisting the Canterbury staff in the subdivision of Waikakahi Estate; Mr. McCurdie was absent a little over three months assisting at Waikakahi; so also was Mr. Neill absent for a little over three months assisting in subdivision of same estate.

Town-section Surveys.—Only a very small area was sectionized this year—viz., 16 acres, into thirty-five sections, at an average cost of 19s. per allotment.

Roads and Railways.—Under this heading the engineering plans of 34½ miles of road were completed, at a cost of £10·03 per mile. This includes 25½ miles of Matakauui-Bendigo Road, which has been estimated to cost £9,600, and if made would certainly be of great benefit to the Wanaka and Hawea settlers, as the distance to Ranfurly would be shortened some twenty-three miles.

Gold-mining Surveys.—One hundred and eight plans (in duplicate) have been received from the staff and licensed private surveyors. These, along with leases in duplicate when for licensed holdings, and in triplicate when for special claims, have been examined, checked, and recorded on record-maps, and entered up in the mining and index record-books. The licenses, after examination and check, have been forwarded to the several Wardens' offices at which the applications for mining areas were received—viz., at Dunedin, Lawrence, Roxburgh, Alexandra, Clyde, Cromwell, Naseby, or Queenstown. "The Mining Act, 1898," came into force on the 1st February last, and, in consequence, many of the licenses made out under the old Act were rendered useless, and plans had to be again indorsed on license-forms under the new Act, thereby entailing a considerable amount of extra work on the draughtsman. The total area dealt with under the above heading amounts to 6,487 acres, representing 168 sections or claims, at a cost of 4·58s. per acre.

Land Transfer Work.—Under this heading fifty-six plans sent in by licensed surveyors have been examined and approved, and recorded on record-maps. The following named instruments of title, &c., have been examined and checked—viz., sixty-four applications to bring land under the Land Transfer Act, ninety-eight certificates in lieu of Crown grants (in triplicate), 1,262 transfers, 884 mortgages, eighteen caveats, 285 leases, 236 transmissions, and 464 certificates prepared in duplicate.

Other Works.—Under this heading are included such works attended to by the staff officers as cannot be tabulated in the ordinary manner. The total expenditure for the year has been £737 9s. 5d., which covers the cost of inspecting, reporting to Commissioner of Crown Lands and to the various Wardens, engineering plans for road-works, measuring bushfelling for grass-seed sowing, general supervision in connection with the various improved-farm settlements, and numerous other duties which need not be mentioned.

Office-work.—During the year seventy-four plans from staff surveyors were examined, checked, and recorded upon the Crown grant record and Land Office maps. The important work of plotting these detached and scattered surveys upon compiled block-sheets has had to be left almost entirely in abeyance, owing to the draughtsmen's time being so fully occupied with other work, one map only of this class of work having been completed during the year—viz., Block X., Glenomaru District. Twenty-six plans (in triplicate) of new roads and roads to be closed have been examined, certified to, and recorded on county and other maps. Nine plans (in triplicate) taking lands by Proclamation for railway purposes have been similarly dealt with. Diagrams have been placed on certificates of title in lieu of Crown grants and other instruments of title as follows, viz.: On 138 single copies, on 158 in duplicate, and on 262 in triplicate, making a total of 1,240. A tracing in cloth of the topography of the Otago District north of 45° latitude, on a scale of eight miles to an inch, was prepared and forwarded to Head Office. The preparation of a map, on a scale of 5 chains to an inch, of Dunedin and suburbs is now well under way; so also is a map for the Defence Department, on a scale of 20 chains to an inch, and showing thereon the position of all roads, tracks, footpaths, and the chief topographical features of the country for fifteen miles around Dunedin. Tracings in duplicate were prepared showing the boundaries of the Dunedin Electorate, on a scale of 20 chains to an inch, for the Registrar of Electors' Department; also, for the same department a map on the same scale was prepared showing the boundaries within which old-age pensions were granted for the Dunedin and Port Chalmers districts. A large amount of work has been done for the Head Office of the Valuation Department, as well as for the local branch of the same department here. Duplicate tracings of the Boroughs of West Harbour, Maori Hill, St. Kilda, North-east Valley, and Roslyn have been made and handed to the branch office here, leaving the Boroughs of Green Island, Milton, Mornington, and Hawksbury still to do. During the year one plan was drawn for photo-lithographing and five were drawn for stone on lithographic transfer-paper, from which 1,650 impressions were pulled. 500 protractor sheets were printed, besides 250 receipt forms of various kinds. 450 maps were mounted, and several of the old and worn record and Land Office maps were repaired.

In July last Mr. James Bain, lithographic printer of this branch of the department, after three months' leave of absence, retired, owing to ill-health, after a service of about twenty-eight years.

Proposed Operations for 1899-1900.—Mr. Langmuir has on hand 11,242 acres, being part of Elderslie Estate, near Oamaru, the cutting-up of which will keep him employed for a considerable time. Mr. Wilnot has some 300 to 400 acres of mining surveys in hand, and I anticipate he will be kept fairly employed during the year surveying rural and mining applications as they come to hand. Mr. Calder has 800 acres of agricultural surveys, and some 200 or 300 acres of mining applications to do; this, along with the mining and other applications coming to hand, will, I presume, keep him fairly well employed. Mr. Neill has been transferred temporarily to assist Mr. C. C. Farr in carrying out the magnetic survey now in hand, and, I presume, will be employed for some considerable time in connection with that work. Mr. Edie has been employed on the temporary staff, doing principally mining surveys; it was found necessary to employ him on account of Mr. Langmuir's transference to Waikakahi Estate.

JOHN HAY, Chief Surveyor.