

ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION.

The Royal Geographical Society having, with the assistance of the Imperial Government, and aided by outside subscriptions, built and equipped the "Discovery" for the purposes of Antarctic research, that vessel, under the command of Captain Scott, R.N., sailed from England in the middle of 1901, and arrived at Lyttelton in December last. On arrival her officers visited the magnetic observatory and were afforded every facility for standardising their instruments, and arranged to have simultaneous observations taken on board the ship and at the Observatory during the former's absence in the south. These are independent of the observations previously arranged to be taken at the instance of the Anglo-German committee appointed at the International Geographical Congress of Berlin in 1899, in connection with the German South Polar Expedition. Before the departure of the exploring vessel Captain Scott arranged to revisit the Observatory on his return from the South.

Since the 30th November last continuous records have been kept of all the magnetic variations, and these will be reduced and published, but as at least a year's records are necessary to determine some of the constants of the instruments, no publication can be made at present.

LONGITUDE OF NEW ZEALAND.

In the appendix will be found a special memorandum upon the longitude of various places in New Zealand, and especially as to that of Mount Cook, the initial station of the surveys of the whole colony. This point has been obliterated by extensive excavations. It is thought that a concise summary of the observations and results of the labours of the skilled and able observers who laboured to attain the utmost exactitude should be republished. The absolute determinations of Captain Carkeek, Messrs. J. T. Thomson and James McKerrow; of Mr. Henry Jackson, and of Major Palmer, call for the highest commendation. The transit of chronometers by Captains Stokes and Nares between Australia and New Zealand, and the electric interchange of time between Mr. Russell, of the Sydney Observatory, and Archdeacon Stock and Mr. C. W. Adams, of New Zealand, confirmed and ultimately refined and determined the initial longitude of the colony with the greatest exactitude attainable.

GENERAL.

As I only took charge of the Lands and Survey on the 1st January last, it has not been possible to acquire a thorough knowledge of the districts and the duties involved. I have consequently felt somewhat at a disadvantage in preparing this report.

I have to express my appreciation of the ready assistance afforded me, and also for the cordial co-operation of the principal officers and other members of the staff.

DEPARTMENTAL CHANGES.

Deaths.

The Department lost the services of the late Mr. Donald Hugh Monro, District Surveyor and Land Transfer Draughtsman in the Christchurch Office. His death, on the 28th July, 1901 came as a great shock to his friends and colleagues. Mr. Monro acquired a knowledge of his profession in the Wanganui District, and entered the provincial service on the 1st January, 1873, as a fully qualified and capable surveyor, joining the General Government service on the 1st April, 1874, at the special request of Sir Donald McLean, the then Native Minister. He ultimately elected to leave the field, and took up office duties in the capacity of Land Transfer Draughtsman, Christchurch, on the 1st November, 1878. From an intimate personal knowledge of him, and his field and office work, I can testify to his splendid abilities, industry, and devotion to duty; in this respect he was second to none on the roll of the Department.

The death of Mr. David Porter, Draughtsman in the Wellington Lands and Survey Office, took place on the 14th April, 1901. His record of service extended from June, 1853, commencing under the General Government, merging into that of the Provincial Government, and finally under this Department. He had a record for longest service as a District Surveyor, in which capacity he rendered excellent work in the early days of the colony, and was universally respected and esteemed by all who had the good fortune to claim his acquaintance or friendship.

The Department also lost the services, through death, of Mr. John Neville Smyth, one of its most conscientious servants, on the 31st December last. He was born in Dublin on the 24th December, 1839, and first joined the Department in 1874 as an Assistant Surveyor, leaving the Service in 1887 in consequence of the retrenchment policy then in force. In 1897 he was re-appointed, and was a steady worker up to the day of his death. In the annual report of the Chief Surveyor, Westland, will be found a sympathetic reference to this officer's services.

Retirement.

Mr. Sidney Weetman, the Chief Surveyor and Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Canterbury District, retired from the public service on a well-earned pension on the 1st January, 1902, after a long and faithful record of duty. Mr. Weetman joined the provincial service of Southland as a surveyor in the year 1863, but removed to Auckland, and rose to the position of District and Inspecting Surveyor, afterwards filling the position of District Surveyor and Land Officer at Gisborne, finally rising to the rank of Chief Surveyor and Commissioner of Crown Lands, in which capacities he served successfully in the Taranaki, Marlborough, and Canterbury Land Districts, displaying zeal, ability, and administrative qualities, which are testified to by the records of this Department in those districts. Mr. Weetman's retirement was regretted the more by his fellow-officers and friends from the fact that it was necessitated by failing health.