

TARANAKI.

Minor Triangulation.—60,400 acres, chiefly subsidiary work, has been completed, at an average cost of 1.5d. per acre, by Messrs. Bullard, Frith, Morpeth, and Watson, mainly for the purposes of governing the sectional surveys upon which they were engaged. The work lay, generally speaking, in broken forest country in four or five different districts.

Rural and Suburban.—As anticipated by my predecessor in his last year's report, the survey of rural and suburban land exceeds in area the previous record in this district by some 20,000 acres, the work, as detailed in the table, showing 76,705 acres, subdivided into 119 sections, at a cost, of 1.73s. per acre. Nearly the whole of this area is in broken forest, some of which was very difficult of access, the surveys of Messrs. Bullard, Watson, Murcott, Sladden, Laing, and Oldfield being exceptionally arduous, and the year's output by these officers is very creditable indeed, whilst traverse closures, with an average error of 1.04 per mile on meridian, and 0.97 on perpendicular, shows that, notwithstanding the rough character of the land being surveyed, it has been kept well within the limit of error allowed by the departmental regulations.

Roads, Railways, and Water-races.—Under this heading appears 29½ miles of road and railway surveys completed at an average cost of £13.48 per mile, most of which being charges against other departments. These are, generally speaking, deviations of old roads, roads in use, or those taken through Native lands, in exercise of the Governor's powers under the Native Land and Public Works Acts. The railway portion is a redefinition of parts of the proposed Stratford route of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, executed generally in connection with other surveys.

Other Work.—This includes the usual and general miscellaneous duties incidental to survey-work, the principal items in connection therewith being inspection-work, mainly for other departments, the cost of which has been recovered. The subdivision of land under the Land for Settlements Act has also necessitated several small expenses, such as a caretaker at Tokaora Settlement, repairing fences, &c. Several roads have also been inspected and reported on for the Roads Department, and a considerable amount of standard survey and back-pegging has been done by our surveyors, all of which has been necessary and useful, involving a total expenditure of £249 16s.

Inspections.—Under my predecessor's instructions, the senior District Surveyor, Mr. Skeet, made seven inspections of the different staff surveyors' work, and Mr. Skinner, Land Transfer Draughtsman, has examined the work of three different surveyors. In all cases the field-work has been found satisfactory. During the two months that I have been in actual charge, I have myself visited the whole of the field staff except Mr. Laing, going over roads and examining generally the country opened and being opened for settlement. I have at the same time made visits over the Upper Waitotara, Patea, and Whenuakura Districts, the country between Stratford and the Upper Tangarakau, and the Ohura portion of the King-country, which I reached by going overland through Taranaki via Mokau, Awakino, Te Kuiti, and Ongarue. I have also made several shorter visits in the neighbourhood of Mount Egmont, Opunake, Hawera, and Upper Waitara, interviewing the settlers, and gaining knowledge generally of the requirements of the district. I feel that I should like to have done more in this direction, but the changes in the office staff and the preparation of various returns asked for at this time of the year rendered my presence in New Plymouth very often desirable. As soon, however, as practicable I will go over other portions of the district, particularly the back settlements, where our most struggling settlers are located.

Field-work in progress and proposed for Next Year.—The major triangulation in progress comprises a number of triangles round Mount Egmont, which Mr. District Surveyor Skeet has in hand; but this officer has been unfortunate in weather. He still hopes, however, before the winter sets in to complete his observations, the area being about 200,000 acres. When this is done, the whole of the major triangulation will be finished; and, in connection with this work, Mr. Skeet suggests the measurement of a new base of verification, the length of which will be about 10 miles, the locality being between Manaia and Eltham. In the minor triangulation class of survey I hardly expect that there will be any necessity for extension, except in regard to subsidiary points necessary to govern current settlement operations, so that I anticipate that practically the whole of the staff will be available for settlement work, and distributed somewhat as follows: Mr. District Surveyor Skeet will probably be employed in completing major triangulation round Mount Egmont, extending standard surveys north of Hawera, also combining the survey of road-deviations in settled districts with the laying-down of standard lines of reference for subsequent Land Transfer and other surveys. A proportion of the cost of deviation-work will be refunded by the Department of Roads. He will also take up miscellaneous sectional work, having in hand about 2,000 acres north of Uretī, and this will probably be increased. Mr. Bullard is employed on about 30,000 acres (partly Crown lands and partly revision of defective magnetic surveys) in Opaku, Omona, and Taurakawa Districts. It may be advisable, however, to postpone the revision-work for another season, and take advantage of his services in opening up Crown lands, say, between the Upper Tongaporutū and Ohura Country, as the development of the latter district is an undertaking that is deservedly attracting attention from the public as a new field for settlement. What is actually wanted first, however, is to complete the through road connection between Stratford and Ohura, as also to connect the Moki and Ohura Roads, and explore and make a road from the Upper Tongaporutū to Ohura, thus practically welding our road systems for the greater portion of the land district. When this is done, very large areas, both of surveyed and unsurveyed Crown lands, would at once be made available for all classes of settlement. Mr. Frith, who is going on six months' leave of absence, when he takes the field again, will be employed in Ohura, and about 5,000 acres will be as much as he is likely to overtake in the coming year. Messrs. Murcott, Watson, and Morpeth will be employed in the same locality. At present the combined area in their hands for settlement survey amounts to about 43,000 acres, of which perhaps 25,000 acres will be completed during the season. Mr. Sladden (who has the field-work of some 3,000 acres