

taken a considerable amount of time to endeavour to bring them up to date. Near Greymouth, what is known as the Paroa Block has been for many years a source of a great deal of trouble, as the overlapping was cropping up everywhere. This has now been nearly all cleared up.

Mining Survey.—Only 6 plans of Mining Surveys have come in, of an area of 540 acres, and all by private surveyors.

Town Section Survey.—One survey of a small township in connection with the coal-mining industry at Paparoa has been completed of 47 sections, and another township is now under survey on another portion of the coalfield for residence sites for a contemplated extension of the mines on a higher level. The other 11 sections were included in a subdivision survey of residence sites near the State colliery at Runanga.

Roads.—Under this heading 33 miles of road has been located and surveyed. This does not include roads laid off as frontages to sections, but those in connection with lands for future settlement.

Other Work.—Under this heading is included work in hand of uncompleted surveys, rural, town, and topographical.

Other Items.—Include 7 inspection surveys, administration in respect of votes and authorities for Roads, Mines, and Tourist Departments, and for protection works against river-encroachment. Of the cost under this head, the sums paid for by other departments and fees received amount to £635 16s. 5d. Mr. District Surveyor Wilson's time was fully taken up with the construction of the numerous works in hand until last August, when he was transferred to the Roads Department as District Road Engineer. Mr. Wilson has always been a most valued and hard-working officer, carrying out his duties conscientiously, and in losing him the Lands and Survey Department has parted with one of their best men, who has borne his share of the hard work of the exploitation of Westland.

Standard.—The standard lengths have been marked on the blocks as put in last year. When the marking was done care was taken to have the temperature as near 62° Fahr. as possible, with no wind or sunshine. Planed boards were laid on the ground between each block to reduce friction as much as possible. The extreme difference was $\frac{1}{12}$ in. in 5 chains, and the mean of six markings was taken. This admirable result was wholly due to the zealous and careful work of Messrs. Skeet and Robinson, who actually effected the marking.

Proposed Operations for 1908-9.—The survey work for the coming year will comprise the subdividing of 35,000 acres of land for settlement in the Arnold, Waimea, Hohonu, Kopara, Ahaura, Wataroa, and Waiho Valleys. Many of the blocks are already in hand. Then there will be the numerous surveys of the scattered areas taken up under the Regulations for the Occupation of Pastoral Lands and under the Mining Districts Land Occupation Act; the completion of township surveys of Upper Paparoa, near the coalfield, and of Rohotu in South Westland. It is proposed also to endeavour to complete standard surveys of Crown lands near Greymouth, of Greymouth, Cobden, and Hokitika. There are so many dealings in and about these towns that the necessity for a standard survey of some sort is becoming more urgent than ever. Owing to the extreme demand for settlement surveys, this work has been put off from year to year.

Office-work.—Mr. Skeet, Chief Draughtsman, reports that the number of plans received during the year was 111, of which 68 were from staff surveyors. Land Transfer plans were 31; mining plans, 6; Public Works plans, 6. Checking has been kept well up to date, 400 traverse sheets having been passed. Application maps kept up; 4 new ones made. Block maps have been kept going, and 9 new ones made to allow of new work being put on. Northern part of Westland County has been sent to the head office for photo-lithography. The southern part is in hand; 36 new tracings of land to be opened under the Land Laws Amendment Act had to be made; 756 plans for leases have been prepared and put on deeds, 246 of which were for Land Transfer titles; 707 tracings for general information and returns have been made. Work for the ensuing year should be the making of block maps of all new work, index maps of Crown grants, Land Transfer and road record maps. Many of these index plans have been waiting to be put in hand and brought up to date.

Departmental.—During the year Mr. Wilmot, Chief Draughtsman, was promoted as Commissioner and Chief Surveyor of Southland. By this promotion we lost the services of a faithful, able, and obliging officer. He was succeeded here as Chief Draughtsman by Mr. District Surveyor Skeet, from the Taranaki staff, who has proved himself a very competent and conscientious officer, well qualified from his past experience in bush-covered country to deal with similar such country in Westland. On the 30th June next Mr. Explorer Douglas retires from the service on a well-deserved pension. For upwards of forty years he has led the arduous life of exploiting this wild and rugged country, and has furnished large numbers of valuable reports and plans, replete with expert information on topography, timbers, geology, &c., besides furnishing reliable notes of the country for settlement purposes. He also for many years conducted explorations for nearly all the main roads in our southern country—a well-read and educated man, a keen observer, of great originality of thought, and most honourable and conscientious in the performance of all his duties. A man of wide repute, yet modest to a fault, of winning, unassuming manner, he never advertised himself, but was ever willing to impart his knowledge, with the result that many publications regarding Westland contain much of Mr. Douglas's wheat amongst the chaff of their egotistical compilers. He is respected and honoured throughout the district, and has nobly earned a high and enduring position on our official roll. We part with our faithful comrade with great reluctance, and wish him a long, happy season of rest in the quiet of his well-earned retirement.

I beg to express my gratification of the faithful and skilful services rendered during the past year by the field surveyors and indoor officers of the Survey Branch of the Department.

G. J. ROBERTS,
Chief Surveyor.