

As pointed out in the last report, a distance of 90 chains of the Turua Road was let by tender at a cost of £1,002 7s. 6d., whilst last November a further section of 76 chains was let at £877 16s. This work was completed during March, and a very satisfactory job has been carried out by the contractors. This is all the metalling that has been done on the eastern side of the Piako River.

On the western side of the river a contract was let for the supply only of gravel for the Pipiroa-Waitakaruru Road, the tramping and spreading being undertaken by the Department's own plant and day labour. Altogether 2,650 cubic yards of shingle was delivered at Pipiroa, and this sufficed to metal 160 chains of the above road.

Owing to the excessive cost of the gravel delivered by scows, and also to the fact that the sea-beach gravel does not bind too well, it was decided to build punts and convey the gravel from the Kauaeranga River at Thames. The strike in November and December, however, interfered with these plans, and in spite of the timber being ordered in November, it was not till after the New Year that the construction of the punts could be put in hand. Two punts were built by contract, whilst a third was purchased. The cost of the three punts was £610, and these can each hold on an average 30 cubic yards when the tides are suitable. On the wharf at Pipiroa a hoisting-winch was erected for unloading the punts direct into the trucks. The loading has been done by contract, whilst an oil-launch tows the punts to Shortland Wharf, where the s.s. "Hauraki" takes them in tow to Pipiroa. This work was undertaken late in March, and consequently only 82 cubic yards was punted across during that month.

The expenditure under this heading out of special grants was £4,095 3s. 4d., of which details are as follows: Bagnall Bros.—Contract 3M, Turua Road, £1,002 7s. 6d.; Bagnall Bros.—Contract 3M, extension Turua Road, £602 18s. 3d.; Winstone Limited—Contract 4M, supply at Pipiroa, £1,126 9s. 3d.; wages for Pipiroa-Waitakaruru Road, £627 14s. 3d.; supplies, £36 3s. 2d.; punts, &c., £699 10s. 11d.: total, £4,095 3s. 4d.

SURVEYS.

During the year some 2,392 acres were surveyed into sections at Waikaka and Kerepehi for settlement purposes. Various other small surveys were completed, whilst at the present time the field-work of 2,000 acres at Ngarua and Waitakaruru is in hand.

The surveys of the Patetonga and Kerepehi townships are also in hand, and will be completed during the winter.

Wherever necessary for the carrying-on of the works, engineering surveys have been completed for present and future requirements.

VALUATIONS.

During the year 2,178 acres were subdivided into rural farms and reserves, the valuation of this area being £18,240, making a total of 32,525 acres, valued at £178,250, now settled and revenue-producing. A further area of 2,172 acres, valued at £15,070, will be offered for selection very shortly. This therefore shows a reclaimed-swamp area of 34,697 acres, of a capital value of £193,320. No credit has been taken for the large area of land utilized as roads, drains, &c.

WORKS EXPENDITURE DURING THE YEAR

Piecework contract absorbed the sum of £5,484 13s. 6d. from the Hauraki Plains Settlement Account, and £1,377 12s. 5d. from special grants. Day labour absorbed a sum of £7,764 3s. 2d. from the Hauraki Plains Settlement Account, whilst £3,263 10s. 7d. was spent out of special grants. All the above were paid from local imprest.

PRINCIPAL WORKS PROPOSED.

The principal works to be carried out during the next financial year are as follows:—

- (1.) Improvements to Piako River.
- (2.) Continuance of cart-road formation (mainly at Waikaka).
- (3.) General drainage development, so as to bring in new areas for settlement.
- (4.) Prosecution of metalling of main roads.
- (5.) Maintenance and improvements to existing works.
- (6.) Formation of access roads leading to Hauraki Plains.

LAND FOR TOWNSHIP AND VILLAGE SITES.

During last year 175 acres were purchased at Kerepehi, and also 25 acres at Waikaka, in order to provide town and village allotments in the above localities. The survey of both these areas is in hand, and will be completed shortly, and they will then be available for sale. These lands were purchased out of the Hauraki Plains Settlement Account.

LAND PROPOSED TO BE OPENED.

During August an area of 2,172 acres in the vicinity of Waitakaruru and Ngarua will be available for selection. In addition an area of about 2,000 acres at Ngarua and Mangawhero should be far enough advanced for selection before the end of the next financial year.

Work has been commenced on the Awaiti Block at Netherton, containing about 2,000 acres, and I consider that this will be available for settlement during the year, provided the Public Works Department carry out their scheme to stop-bank the Waihou River, which at the present time floods this particular block.

In my last report mention was made of a block of hill and swamp land adjoining the Hauraki Plains at Waitakaruru, which it was proposed to open up for selection. Unfortunately this could not be carried out, but, without fail, this area will be available during the coming spring. The main roads to this block have all been constructed, whilst the by-roads are now under construction.