

1920.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY:
PUBLIC DOMAINS OF NEW ZEALAND
(ANNUAL REPORT ON).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,— Department of Lands and Survey, Wellington, 10th June, 1920.

I have the honour to report on the public domains of the Dominion for the year ended 31st December, 1919.

The domains administered under Part II of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908, now number 589, comprising a total area of 85,426 acres. Included in this area is the Wanganui River Trust Domain of 33,184 acres.

During the year under review nine new domains comprising an area of 93 acres were constituted, and eight of these are now controlled by local Domain Boards, and in the other case the appointment of a Board will shortly be gazetted.

With the exception of fifty-three, which are controlled by Commissioners of Crown Lands, all the domains are administered by local Boards, and the reports supplied in pursuance of section 45 of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908 show that, generally speaking, the majority of the domain lands have been well looked after.

By section 48 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1919, the Mowhanau and Nukumarū Domains were amalgamated for administrative purposes, and by section 77 of the same Act the control of part of the Kowai Domain was placed under the Amberley Town Board acting as a Domain Board.

Special legislation was also passed last session authorizing the Opotiki and Waioeka Domain Board to borrow by way of overdraft a sum not exceeding £2,000 for the purpose of carrying out essential improvements to the Domain.

It is pleasing to note that in some instances memorials in memory of fallen soldiers are being erected on domain lands with the permission of the Department, one notable instance being the Tauranga Domain Board, which proposes to erect ornamental gates and improve the entrance to the Domain at a total cost of £1,000, this sum being principally raised by local subscription.

The Uretawa Domain Board has notified me of a similar proposal to erect memorial gates at an estimated cost of £250. In certain other cases it is the intention of the controlling Boards to build public halls as suitable memorials, and where such proposals meet with approval special legislation will be introduced to permit of the work being done.

I desire to mention that Domain Board members receive no remuneration for the work they carry out, and in the majority of cases they discharge an important public duty conscientiously and without ostentation, their only reward being a knowledge of duty well done. This fact is fully recognized by the Department, and Domain Boards are given every assistance and advice on matters pertaining to the control and management of the lands under their care.

During recent years it has not been possible to afford much monetary assistance to Boards in outlying districts to help in beautifying and improving domains, as the funds at the disposal of the Department for this purpose have been strictly limited owing to the unprecedented demands on public moneys brought about by the war. It is hoped that in the future more money may be available for this work, as the importance of providing new recreation-grounds and maintaining the present ones in good order to cope with the athletic and recreative requirements of an increased population cannot be stressed too strongly. Where domains are situated in well-settled localities it is expected that the residents will themselves raise the sums required.

It is regretted that some Boards still continue to show but little interest in the reserves under their charge, and consistently fail to supply the Department with the reports required by statute; but, speaking generally, the public domains of the Dominion may be considered to be in a very satisfactory condition.

I have, &c.,

T. N. BRODRICK, Under-Secretary.

The Hon. D. H. Guthrie, Minister of Lands.

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