

To establish a satisfactory turf, the work at Hastings has involved the transportation of some 8,000 cubic yards of black soil from various parts of the adjoining district to enable sufficient soil to be placed on the raw pumice sand, of which the aerodrome is composed. The work is well in hand, a total of thirty-five men being employed on co-operative contract.

Steady progress in the regrading of the Dannevirke Aerodrome is being made, an average of thirty-nine men being employed.

Wellington District.—Surveys have been undertaken at Masterton, Feilding, and Palmerston North.

At Masterton construction work is well forward with the regrading and levelling of the field, approximately one hundred men being employed.

At Feilding preliminary construction work, involving the clearing of the site and ring-draining of the area, is in hand.

At Palmerston North preliminary construction work in connection with drainage is in hand.

Nelson District.—Surveys have been carried out at Stoke and Tahunanui for aerodromes to serve the Town of Nelson.

In addition, survey work has been completed at Motueka and construction work authorized.

At Blenheim the survey and preparation of the preliminary scheme is in hand.

Improvements to the existing Aero Club's aerodrome at Stoke have been carried out to enable commercial machines to operate from this ground until such time as the permanent airport at Tahunanui can be made available.

Christchurch - Canterbury District.—Surveys have been carried out for aerodromes at Timaru and the Hermitage, Mount Cook. Construction work on the latter was undertaken, approximately 12 square chains being completed, but with the advance of severe winter weather work had to be suspended.

Greymouth - Westland District.—Surveys have been carried out at Mahitahi River, Mahitahi Post-office, Bruce Bay, Waiho, Haast, Upper Okuru, Mussel Point, Inchbonnie, Westport, and Hokitika.

Construction work is in hand at Inchbonnie, Haast, Upper Okuru, Mussel Point, Westport, Waiho, Weheka, and Hokitika, but at the latter place, owing to the scarcity of unemployed labour, progress is very slow.

In conjunction with this Department, a survey has been carried out by the Greymouth Borough Council for an aerodrome-site at Greymouth.

Dunedin - Otago District.—Surveys have been carried out in this district at Balclutha and Mosgiel.

During the period, construction work was put in hand at Balclutha by the Borough Council, and this ground is now licensed.

Invercargill - Southland District.—Surveys have been carried out at Invercargill, Te Anau, and Gore.

Construction work has been put in hand at Invercargill, and a certain amount of progress has been made.

The total number of men employed at the end of the period was 1,062.

PLANT AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT.

Plant in use.—Available construction plant representing an original capital cost of approximately £417,500 was used during the year upon the major public works in hand throughout the Dominion, and upon Main Highway Board's work, the use of available plant costing approximately £27,500 was involved.

Works upon which Plant was used.—The major works upon which plant was used during the year are as follows: Ahuriri Lagoon Reclamation; Arapuni Power-house extensions; Falls Dam and other irrigation works in Otago Central; swamp drainage and clearing of willows, Taupiri district; land-clearing and stumping in Stratford and Taumarunui districts; land-development and roading generally in all districts; stone-quarries for road-metal in districts scattered throughout New Zealand; Waitaki Hydro Works; Upper Waikaremoana Power-development Scheme; Te Anau-Milford Road; bitumen-sealing and road-maintenance work upon main highways in all districts throughout the Dominion.

Plant not in Service.—There is still a quantity of plant released from the closed railway-construction works available for sale, or transfer, as occasion demands, and this has been kept painted and protected from the weather and laid up in a satisfactory manner.

Plant disposed of.—A total of 163 plant items was disposed of during the year, 113 items being sold for a total sum of £7,822; thirty-nine items were transferred to other Government Departments, and eleven worn-out items were written off and disposed of as scrap metal.

New Plant purchased.—Seventy-five new plant items were purchased for the Department's use during the year at a total cost of £16,686, and these comprised 30 motor-cars, 29 motor-trucks, 2 outboard marine motors, 6 tractors, 1 barge, 1 bitumen boiler, 1 grab, and 5 road-planers.

The cars and trucks, which latter include light runabout vehicles for survey and transmission-line work, were required mostly as replacements for vehicles worn out in service.

Motor-vehicle Operation.—Owing to a large increase in the number of the works carried out, and also due to the scattered locations of these works, a big increase in mileage was necessary, with a corresponding increase in the number of vehicles and also in mileage allowances paid to officers using privately-owned vehicles.