

PUKAPUKA.

The following are extracts from the report of the Resident Agent at Pukapuka. Owing to lack of communication on account of the hurricane season this report is for the year ended 30th September, 1934 :—

Health.—Health conditions have been satisfactory throughout the year, although it was not possible for a Medical Officer to visit the island.

In October a Native medical practitioner from Samoa visited Pukapuka, but, although he was able to stay only five days, he was able in that time to carry out a fair amount of medical work, and the visit was greatly appreciated by the inhabitants.

Trade.—Again this year there was no direct communication with Rarotonga, and only two schooner calls were made from Samoa.

Copra exported amounted to 89 tons. This is a considerable drop from last year, when 125 tons were exported. The depression in trade has resulted in our people being hard up for money with which to buy clothes and other necessities.

Planting of Lands.—The people have responded to the call to keep on planting as much native food as possible in order to tide them over the bad times, and in consequence there have been considerable new plantings of puraka and taro. Coconuts, breadfruit, pawpaws, and bananas have also received attention.

High Court.—Seven sittings of the Court dealt with thirty-six cases. These were mostly for breaches of regulations and local Ordinances.

Island Council.—Five meetings of the Council were held during the year, when various matters affecting island affairs were discussed.

School.—There are 155 children on the roll, who take a keen interest in their work and who attend regularly. Parents are finding very great difficulty in providing clothes for children to attend school, and unless conditions improve there is a danger that attendances will fall off considerably.

PALMERSTON.

This island (which consists of a number of motus of a total area of about 1,000 acres) lies 270 miles to the north-west of Rarotonga.

It is inhabited by about 100 descendants of William Marsters, the elder, who went to Palmerston in 1862 to manage the island for one, Brander, a trader. As Brander did not return, Marsters remained on in occupation of the island, but without a title thereto.

William Marsters, the elder, was granted a lease of Palmerston by the Crown in 1892.

He died in 1899. Subsequently a lease was granted in favour of all the issue of William Marsters, the elder.

The present head of the family is William Marsters, the second, who is still alive. He is an old man of seventy-two, and is the recognized head of the island.

The present lease of the island is to the three heads of the families in trust for all the descendants of William Marsters, the elder.

Palmerston is an unfortunate island so far as hurricanes are concerned.

In 1914 there was a hurricane. At the end of March, 1926, the island was completely devastated. Heavy gales damaged the island again in February, 1931. The recent (1935) hurricane again completely wiped out all coconuts and ground crops, and left the inhabitants dependent almost entirely upon fish.

It was fortunate for the islanders that the N.Z.G.S. "Matai" was chartered to make a cruise of the Cook Group, as she arrived in time to land relief supplies of food and relieve the necessities of the people.

SUWARROW.

This island, over which British sovereignty was proclaimed on the 22nd April, 1889, contains an estimated area of 600 acres. It was first occupied by Messrs. Lever Bros., who carried on operations in pearl-shell diving and experimented in the planting of gold-lipped shell from Torres Straits, but without success.

The hurricane of 1914 completely spoiled the island so far as pearl-shell was concerned, and a great deal of damage was also done to coconut plantations on several of the motus.

The island, which is 513 miles north-west of Rarotonga and which is at present leased to A. B. Donald, Ltd., produces very little copra at the present time.

On account of the fact that there is a safe passage through the reef, a portion of the island was many years ago declared an Admiralty reserve.

The island is a sanctuary for sea-birds, which are very numerous, and there is also good fishing in the lagoon and round the coast.

NASSAU.

Nassau lies about forty-five miles south of Pukapuka, and contains an area of a little over 300 acres. It is owned by the Samoa Shipping and Trading Co., Ltd., and is well planted with coconuts.