

Rotoiti.

Gazetted under development in June, 1932, to serve the purpose of an avenue for the absorption of the unemployed of Otarae-Marae on the northern shores of Lake Rotoiti, this block of 4,912 acres has now 1,700 acres in good pasture. It was carrying 4,070 sheep and 435 run cattle at 31st March, 1937.

The scheme employed thirteen men (with twenty dependants), who were engaged during the past year on the following work: The clearing of 84 acres; 237 chains of fencing, with 391 chains of repairs; clearing 53 chains of fire-breaks; the splitting of 50,000 battens; the erection of 1 cottage and 1 wool-shed.

Last winter the area carried 1,900 ewes, 1,600 wethers, and 250 breeding cows.

The sales comprised 1,929 lambs and 1,506 wethers. The wool-clip of 79 bales, or 27,793 lb. from 3,460 sheep, realized £1,599.

Rotorua Nursery.

The nursery at Wharenui has been closed. The land there had become weed infested and overrun with grass-grub, thereby making it difficult to raise seedlings. A new nursery on virgin land on the Peka area was established during the year, and the results are particularly promising.

The seeds planted last October resulted in a first class strike, and good growth is showing. This year trees already lined out number 1,076,000, while 1,589,000 remain to be planted out.

An area of 5 acres is now planted, and during this next year it is proposed to clear a further area adjoining, so that sufficient land will be available in rotation.

The foreman, who is an enthusiast, was previously employed for many years by the State Forest Department, and the Native Department is exceptionally fortunate in having an experienced man of his calibre to handle this important work. During June and July arrangements were made for the planting of 500,000 barberry cuttings. This work was completed and an excellent strike has resulted. It is intended to experiment with barberry hedges, which should do well and give good results in the Rotorua area.

The foreman reports that the trees planted out on the various schemes in the district are doing well.

Ruatahuna.

The lands constituting the Ruatahuna scheme are situated in the valley at the head of the Whakatane River in the heart of the Urewera Country. The total area of the scheme lands is 12,181 acres, of which 2,500 acres are classed as flat to rolling and the remainder is practically all steep and rugged country. Climatic conditions in this area are severe, the average annual rainfall being 80 in., while snowfalls are often experienced.

This scheme was initiated after the Hawke's Bay earthquake in 1931 with a view to providing employment for Maoris of this section of the Tuhoe tribe. The country is slightly tainted with sheep sickness, and is a sheep farming proposition.

Settlers' live-stock on the scheme as at the 31st March, 1937, comprised 1,780 breeding ewes, 816 hoggets, and 229 beef cattle. The wool-clip aggregated 51 bales.

The fencing carried out will enable a larger number of stock to be carried, and, with top-dressing of pastures, losses of stock should be minimized.

During the period under review employment was provided for some 30 men, who have some 150 dependants, adults and children. Work undertaken included 500 acres of clearing and sowing down in grass, grubbing of manuka and briers on areas suitable for ploughing, completion of the Mataatua Road giving access to settlers on the northern portion of the scheme, fifteen miles of boundary and subdivisional fencing, sowing 500 acres, top-dressing the greater portion of the grassed areas, the erection of cattle-yards and outbuildings.

Since the commencement of development activities there has been a noticeable improvement in the health of the Maoris, and many of the people are erecting houses with timber secured at reasonable rates from a local sawmill. The potato crops throughout the district this year have been good.

Losses of stock have previously been heavy on this scheme, due, no doubt, to extreme cold in winter and to lack of fencing and prevalence of noxious weeds, but it is anticipated that in time these difficulties will be overcome. Development operations are being restricted to a steady annual programme to ensure the preservation and improvement of the present felled areas.

Taheke.

This block of 9,081 acres adjoins and is in quality and contour very similar to the Okere scheme.

The area in grass is 2,015 acres, and carried during last winter 1,240 ewes, 1,050 wethers, and 200 breeding cows; 300 top ewe lambs were retained, the balance being sold as fats.

The wool-clip from 2,306 sheep was 49 bales, or 16,934 lb. The cash receipts for the year under review were wool £984 and sheep £1,527.

The work performed on the block consisted of the top-dressing of the grassed area; 290 acres of bushfelling; the clearing of 326 acres of second growth; the ploughing, cultivating, and sowing in grass of 92 acres; the erection of 350 chains of fences; the formation of 34 chains of roads; surface sowing of 198 acres; the clearing of 182 chains of fire-breaks; and the preparation for surface sowing of 50 acres.