

TAIRAWHITI MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

The boundary of this district encloses all the country east of a line drawn roughly from Hicks Bay, along the Raukumara, Motu, and Huiarau Ranges, including Lake Waikaremoana, and then following the course of the Mohaka River to the Pacific Ocean. Within its confines are the ancestral territories of the Ngati-Porou, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata, and a section of the Ngati-Kahungunu tribes.

This past year has seen developmental undertakings pursued further, three new schemes having been gazetted and additional areas added to existing projects, so that at the 31st March, 1938, there were eleven development schemes embracing a gross area of 70,678 acres.

Outlines of the various schemes are shown in the individual reports following, but, generally speaking, development has proceeded satisfactorily. The price ruling for dairy-produce has been sufficient to return a living to most settlers, especially to those whose sections are fully developed, but the returns for wool have declined, due to the fall in market prices, although the quality has been up to standard. As far as the two principal sheep stations under development in this district are concerned, Whareponga and Uruahi, dividends were available to the beneficial owners for the first time.

The cash receipts for the year ended 31st March, 1938, totalled £43,180, which is a 34-per-cent. increase on last year's figure.

Severe flooding in the Tairāwhiti district in February, 1938, caused considerable silting up of pastures and the destruction of fences. In the Tikitiki area some thirty farms were affected, and in three instances the dairy herds had to be distributed amongst other settlers, as the whole of the pasture was lost, and there was no hope of regassing until next season. Action was immediately taken to re-erect fences and resow the silted areas, some conception of the state of which may be seen from photographs (Nos. 38 and 39) at the end of the report. The majority of the sheep stations, particularly Uruahi and Ngamahanga, suffered severe damage through slips and erosion, but the loss of stock was light. Apart from scheme lands, numerous other Maori farmers were financially crippled through damage caused by these floods. Labour provided through the Employment Promotion Fund was made available to these settlers by the State for rehabilitating their properties. The little Maori community of Waiomatatini also suffered damage, owing to their fine marae building, their cultivations and houses being inundated by flood-waters and debris.

Under the State's schemes in this district are 227 established settlers upon whom are dependent 1,139 persons, while further employment thereon was given to 578 men. On privately owned Native land 485 workmen were engaged on contracts subsidized from the Employment Promotion Fund.

Wharekahika.

This is one of the new schemes in the Tairāwhiti district, which runs from the Maraehara River to a point four miles past Potaka, eight miles from Cape Runaway, and takes in scattered country over practically the whole area of the Matakaoa County. It comprises 11,684 acres, of which one-fifth is mixed-quality flat country with approximately the same area of easy sheep and cattle hill country, whilst the balance is steep hard hill country in standing bush, scrub, and fern, none of which has been cleared. As this is a new scheme just recently taken over, little has been done so far. The existing pastures are poor, as also is the stock. There are thirty-six settlers, occupying 10,934 acres of the scheme, with 123 dependants, and they appear to be a good hardy type of people.

Live-stock carried totalled 451 milking-cows, 188 other dairy stock, 645 run cattle, 5,100 breeding-ewes, 3,900 dry sheep, and 31 working-horses. Housing conditions are poor, but an extensive programme is being planned. One dwelling and four cow-sheds were built last year. With close and careful supervision these settlers should develop into self-supporting farmers. Owing to shortage of labour, boundary fences are being concentrated on, and until these are completed very little other work can be contemplated, although the year's work embraced 527 acres of bushfelling, 462 chains of fencing, 126 chains of draining, 259 acres of grassing, 24 acres of cultivations, and 10 chains of roading.

The returns for wool and live-stock are high, owing to the fact that five established Waiapu-Matakaoa scheme properties, comprising 3,417 acres of sheep country, have been transferred to Wharekahika for administrative convenience.

Takatahu.

This property is situated approximately three miles inland from the mouth of the Karakatuwhero River, just north of Te Araroa. It comprises 418 acres, most of which is rich dairy flats. The entire area, which was covered in heavy bush prior to development, has now been cleared and sown in good English grasses. It is farmed as two dairy-farms, one of which (258 acres) is managed by a Maori manager with a staff of two, whilst the other section is occupied as a settler's property by one of the owners of the block. These two workers have seven dependants. Seventeen labourers were also employed on this scheme. Development has reached an advanced stage, but heavy logging and stumping requires to be carried out, and river-protection work, draining, and willow planting are also necessary. Herd testing was carried out on the whole dairy herd of 130 cows during the current season. There were also 200 breeding-ewes and 38 run cattle on the scheme at 31st March, 1938.