

Waverley and Wanganui; and for new police-stations at Kawakawa, Aratapu, Pukekohe, Moawhanga, and Mokihinui, and sundry minor works throughout the colony.

HARBOUR DEFENCES.

The amount voted last year for harbour defences was £5,000, as against £7,000 for the year 1891–92. The net expenditure for the year was as follows :—

	£
On works in the colony	4,349
On land for depôts and batteries, and miscellaneous charges ...	214
Making a total of	£4,563

The total expenditure on harbour defences from the commencement of the works up to the 31st March last, was, in round numbers, as follows :—

	£
On material of war and charges thereon	238,107
On defence-works, batteries, depôts, and charges thereon ...	208,137
On purchases, &c., of land, sites for batteries and depôts, and charges thereon	36,732
Making a grand total of	£482,976

During the year several works at the three chief ports have been more or less brought to a finish by the employment of prison labour, but further work yet remains to be done on some of them.

The expenditure on the forts and batteries at the four principal ports during the year, including the cost of surveys of mine-fields, and £214 for land purchased in Otago, was as follows :—

	£
Auckland	1,432
Wellington	1,881
Lyttelton	876
Dunedin	374
Total	£4,563

It is proposed to ask for a vote of £5,000 this year, to carry on the works now in progress.

MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES ON THE PUBLIC WORKS FUND.

PURCHASE OF NATIVE LANDS.

The return presented to Parliament on the 19th July last, pursuant to the provisions of "The Native Land Purchases Act, 1892," shows that during the year ended 31st March last an area of 132,357 acres was added to the public estate by purchases finally completed. The portion of this area included in the work of the year was 66,190 acres. Further progress on purchases still incomplete was made to the extent of 141,518 acres, thus making the total work of the year up to 207,708 acres.

The area of 141,518 acres mentioned above includes 59,541 acres of the Awarua Block, at the southern end of the North Island Main Trunk Railway. It is hoped that by the 31st December next a further area of from 40,000 to 50,000 acres in this block, which contains much more than the average proportion of first-class land, will have been acquired, after which the interests of the Crown will be defined and located by the Native Land Court, with a view to the land being made available for settlement early next year. Extensive purchases, details of which will be found in the return above referred to, within the Rohe Potae or King-country, at the northern end of the line, have also been completed, and others are in progress. Considering that the owners of these lands are very numerous and scattered, the results must, on the whole, be regarded as very gratifying.

It is hoped that additional facilities for the acquisition of Native lands will be provided by the legislation of the present session, thus enabling a large proportion of the seven millions of acres now lying waste and unproductive in the North Island to be brought within the reach of settlement during the ensuing year, a result which would be highly beneficial to both Natives and Europeans.