

Office-work.—Probably the most important feature of the indoor work for the year has been the rearrangement of the new safe, which I initiated on our removal to new premises. All the plans in the office have been gone through and re-indexed, and, as there were over 3,100 of them, it has taken a long time to get them into proper order. A number of these were to a certain extent in duplicate and triplicate—that is, representing the same areas surveyed at different times and in many cases with different data on them, so they had to be all gone through in order to decide which to keep and which to put on one side. The field-books and other survey records have also been gone through, and, although there necessarily is still a great deal yet to be done before complete registers of everything can be prepared, matters however are so far advanced that I hope shortly to finish what is required by the ordinary public room staff.

The bulk of the general office-work at present consists of attending to the wants of the public and the requirements of the large staff at present employed in the field, and information in connection with special settlements, Road Board work in connection with the expenditure by local bodies of “thirds” and “fourths,” tracings for selectors, Crown Land Rangers, &c.

The amount of office-work to be got through is constantly increasing, and the staff to some extent is working at a disadvantage in being for the present situated on a lower and upper flat, which occasions loss of time in communicating with the different branches of the office. The main drafting-room however is probably one of the best in the colony, and, when the new safe situated between this and the public room is in proper working-order, the work of finding any plan, which by the new numbering and system of drawers established cannot easily be misplaced, and of replacing it after being used, will be materially lightened. So I anticipate when the offices are all situated on the upper story, and can be easily reached by either the proposed lift or the new staircase, we shall have perhaps the most conveniently worked district office in the colony, and consequently more work be put through with greater ease than hitherto.

I enclose an interesting report from Mr. W. H. Dunnage, one of the temporary assistant surveyors in the Waimarino country, on an ascent he made of Ruapehu, and a description of the glacier on the top thereof, which he illustrated by several very effective photographs. (See Appendix No. 6, “Explorations.”)

In concluding my report for the year, I have to express my thanks both to the field and office staff for the effective aid they have given me in carrying out the very heavy work which has fallen on the department during the past year.

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Rural and Suburban Surveys.—There have been only two surveyors employed on land-settlement surveys during the year—viz., Messrs. Sadd and Thomson—in the part of the district outside the Midland Railway Company’s area of selection. Three authorised surveyors have been employed occasionally and paid by fees. 13,943 acres in 186 sections have been surveyed in isolated sections in mountainous bush-country. Of this area, 13,134 acres in 111 sections, averaging 118 acres in the holdings, have been applications under the Land Acts, and 809 acres in seventy-five allotments have been surveyed for land under the Mines Act, within the Buller Coal Reserve, by Mr. Snodgrass.

Town Section Survey.—Two hundred and twenty-nine allotments have been surveyed in the Townships of Seddonville, Millerton, and Village of Torea, under the regulations of the Mines Act, within Buller Coal Reserve.

Native Land Court Survey.—Fourteen allotments, containing 261 acres, have been surveyed for the Native Department, consisting of small scattered areas in the Waitapu and Aorere districts.

Gold-mining Surveys.—These amount to eleven in number, the larger part being in the Buller district, and for the last two or three years have been steadily decreasing in number.

Road Surveys.—Only a small length of these has been made during the year, amounting to seven miles and three-quarters, chiefly to give access to sectional lands.

Midland Railway Block Surveys.—Blocks 130, 131, and 127 have been selected and are in course of survey. In order to lay down the outside boundaries of these blocks a large amount of interior sectional work has required to be surveyed with topography. The field-work of Blocks 130, 131, amounting to about 27,000 acres, is completed, but not plotted. Block 127, containing about 44,000 acres, will be completed in the field about the end of May next. The field-work of about 142 square miles of triangulation has been completed in the field, but not finally plotted. The plotting of these works will be taken in hand during the winter season, and the services of an extra plotting draughtsman is necessary to enable the surveyors to overtake these arrears, so as to take the field again in the next summer season, in the high back-country.

Proposed Operations for Ensuing Season.—Three sections containing 11,892 acres, and one of 1,800 acres, held under lease with pre-emptive right, have been purchased last year in the Amuri district, the boundaries of which must be defined on the ground for certificate of title. Further purchases may be expected next year, which will also require survey. After the arrears of plotting have been overtaken, two surveyors, Mr. D. Innes Barron and another, will be required to undertake these surveys. Mr. R. T. Sadd will complete the 2,000 acres in hand and survey current land and gold-mining applications in the Takaka and Collingwood districts, Mr. J. D. Thomson current applications in the Waimea and Motueka districts.

Mr. Snodgrass will complete arrears of applications on hand in the Karamea, and survey about two or three miles of the Wangapeka-Karamea proposed road. As soon as the snow is off the hills, a survey of the above road requires to be made from the Wangapeka Saddle, in continuance