

together with various tables required by you, as also his report on the co-operative system of contract, to which I have simply the honour to refer you for information.

Operations for 1895-96.—The amount of £7,698 has been carried forward to next year as against work unfinished and in progress, and a special feature of this balance is that it is nearly all for surveys commenced during the past year, and not, as has been the case previously, for work extending sometimes over four years. The main work to look forward to for the coming season will be somewhat as follows, viz:—

Mr. Lowe's triangulation in the Awarua-Pohangina country, of a quarter of a million acres; the settlement surveys in the Awarua Block, by Messrs. Climie, Earle, Roche, McKay, Biggs, and Morice, amounting altogether to about 62,500 acres; the completion of Marton Nos. 3 and 4 and Gladstone Farm Homestead Blocks in the Waimarino country, and also the balance of the applications there, by Messrs. C. A. and A. J. Mountfort, and Messrs. Dunnage, Seaton, and Lewis; and a new selection block north of the Gladstone Farm Homestead Block should also be got ready. The Waimarino Native Land Court orders and reserves should be completed by Mr. Dalziell, and the small grazing-run block at Retaruke prepared for offering. The Raetihi Native Land Court Block of 17,200 acres, in which the Government has interests, and now almost surrounded by sectional surveys, requires completion, mapping being the principal part of the work. At Ruanui, Mr. Bristed is subdividing the Government purchase of 1,500 acres, and Mr. Maitland will complete the survey of the Hunterville-Tokaano Road, of about 60 miles.

Coming to the East Coast, Mr. Littlejohn will take up miscellaneous surveys in different parts of the Wairarapa, such as odd applications, back-pegging, Kaiwhata runs, &c., and possibly any surveys of roads in use, but not mapped, near where he may be working. Mr. Thompson will continue the survey of the Wairarapa roads in the north and south counties. I hope to have an officer available for road surveys of a similar character in the Rangitikei County. I should like also to put on an officer to undertake the standard surveys, long promised and urgently required, for such places as Feilding, Palmerston, Pahiatua, Petone, Hutt, and other suburbs of Wellington.

Office Work.—A noteworthy feature of the year has been the location of the indoor staff in our new and convenient offices, and for the first time since I took charge of the Wellington District have all the officers been together and in settled quarters, which, taken now as a whole, leaves very little to be desired in the way of completeness.

Mr. Mackenzie, Chief Draftsman, reports that much of the general work for the past year, as has been the case for the two previous years, consisted in attending to the wants of the field staff, and supplying tracings and information for the public, local bodies, selectors of lands under special and ordinary settlement conditions, Crown Lands Rangers, &c.

The computer, Mr. Carrington, received and examined sixteen sectional, seventy-one Native, forty-five road, four township, eight railway, and fourteen miscellaneous plans, or one hundred and fifty-eight in all, which were passed on for reduction and record in the usual manner.

In the general office, twelve tracings were prepared for photo-lithography of lands to be offered under ordinary conditions, and eight of special-settlement blocks, besides a number of others on transfer paper.

In compilations, seven new Crown grant record maps were constructed. As many of the field staff were working in districts where the triangulation and topographical information was defective, and where the Crown purchases depended on further survey, it has become necessary, in the absence of reliable forty-chain compilations, for me to have prepared provisional maps or tracings as data comes to hand, which has taken up the time of the office staff considerably. In the coming year, however, now that farm-homestead work and the wants of the field surveyors will be less pressing, I hope to make a start with the solid work of the compilation of new maps on the forty and eighty scale, which I have been gradually working up to and laying the foundation for in the general classification of the maps since I took charge here.

Land Transfer Branch.—Mr. J. W. Davis, the draftsman in charge of the work in this branch, in addition to the information scheduled in Table 4, reports that the amount of work passing through the office has been slightly less than last year, although greater than in 1892-93. Plans of 864 allotments, ranging in area from $1\frac{1}{2}$ perches to 3,595 acres, and totalling 29,860 acres, underwent the different stages of examination and recording. Mr. Davis draws attention to the necessity for standard surveys in the suburban districts and country towns, so that the land transfer operations can be kept under proper check. All arrears have been brought up to date, and, as time permits, land transfer index maps are being prepared.

Ruapehu Ascent.—A further report, in continuation of his report of last year, has been made by Mr. W. H. Dunnage, describing his reascent of Ruapehu since the lately-reported increased thermal action of the lake situated on the top of the mountain. His report has already been forwarded to you, and shows that the immense column of steam seen to ascend from the mountain on the 10th March last could only have arisen from an increased temperature of the lake, which, probably, was then in a boiling condition. This, he finds, has now moderated, the temperature of the lake at the time of his reascent having fallen to 128 degrees Fahr., and it will probably soon resume its normal condition. No other disturbance has taken place, and the smoke and flame, said to have been seen arising from the mountain, could only have existed in the imagination of the persons reporting it.

In concluding my report, I would draw your special attention to the very large amount of work which has been put through by officers of the department this season, and to express my thanks, both to the staff and temporary officers, for the way they have worked to complete such an excellent return for the year's work now under review.

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