

MINING SURVEYS.

A very noticeable feature in the survey returns of this year is the remarkable increase in surveys under this head. In 1895, the area surveyed was 4,959 acres; for the year ended 31st March last, the area is 77,677, divided into 1,239 areas. Five-sixths of this amount is situated in the Thames District, Auckland, where the new process of extracting the precious metals from the ore has led to an extraordinary expansion of gold-mining, and a consequent rush to acquire mining areas. The whole of these surveys are made by the authorised surveyors, nominated by the miners, though all the plans have to be recorded, checked, and compiled in the Survey Office, Auckland, a work which, in addition to ordinary duties, has taxed the department considerably. The Chief Surveyor, Auckland, reports that there appears to be no diminution in the number of applications; thirty surveyors being engaged at the present time in surveying the applications. The cost of these surveys is defrayed by the miners. There has also been an increase in this class of work in the Nelson District, but it is trifling compared with Auckland.

ROAD SURVEYS, ETC.

Under this heading a slightly-increased mileage has been turned out—590·8 miles as against 542·2 miles for the previous period. These surveys are independent of the roads laid out in settlement blocks, and, as usual, consist in main or branch roads taken to give access to other lands, or are the through main roads of the country surveyed to place the titles on a proper footing. The work of legalising the formed roads in some parts of the Wellington District has been advanced during the year by the survey and record of fifty-six miles of road. This work should be almost completed during the present year. The mean cost of this class of work last year was £12 5s. 6d. per mile, a result due to much of the country being open and not very broken. Some exploration for a main road which will eventually lead in a tolerably direct line from Gisborne to Rotorua has been done, and the fact that a fair line can be obtained has been proved.

MISCELLANEOUS WORK.

The cost under this heading covers all classes of work done by the field staff which cannot be entered under other headings. It consists of field inspection, assisting in inspection of improvement conditions on selected lands, explorations, sundry small surveys, attendance at Native Land Courts, reports or special services, road supervision, engineering surveys, supervision of settlement operations, &c. The cost was £7,925.

BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR SURVEYORS.

In order to assimilate the nature of the examinations for surveyors, advantage has been taken of the power given in the Land Act to appoint a general Board of Examiners to conduct the examinations hitherto held by the Chief Surveyors of each district. The Chief Surveyors still remain supervisors in each centre. The regulations were gazetted 5th-March of this year.

The Board of Examiners consists of the persons for the time being holding the respective offices of the Surveyor-General, the Under-Secretary for Lands, the Assistant Surveyor-General, the Inspecting Engineer Mines Department, the Chief Surveyor for the Land District of Hawke's Bay, the Chief Surveyor for the Land District of Canterbury.

The Surveyor-General is chairman of the Board, and Mr. T. M. Grant, of the Head Office, has been appointed secretary.

Examinations after the first one will be held in the months of March and September of each year, on dates to be fixed by the Board and notified in the *New Zealand Gazette*; they will take place at the principal Survey Office of each land district in which there are candidates for examination.

The Board has been in communication with similar Boards in the neighbouring colonies, and, while studying the particular requirements of New Zealand, it has aimed at some uniformity, in the mode and standard of the examination papers set, with the curriculum demanded by the other Examining Boards of the Australasian Colonies. The regulations are framed to allow of men of varied surveying and engineering attainments entering the ranks of the profession; but, the technical knowledge of the land surveyor and the actual experience under the New Zealand system being insisted upon as a *sine quâ non*, the status of the authorised surveyors in this colony is upheld and a uniformity of qualification insured.

In order to conserve the interests and to do justice to surveyors who had served what might be called an "informal training," extending perhaps over many years, and also to meet the cases of those surveyors who have passed in other Australasian Colonies, the following clauses were inserted in the Regulations:—

"Upon payment of a fee of £1 1s. a certificate of competency without examination may be granted by the Board to any person who makes application therefor in writing, and satisfies the Board that he is of good character and repute, and also,—

"(a.) That he is a duly-authorised surveyor under 'The Land Act, 1877'; or

"(b.) That, being the holder of a license or certificate as surveyor granted by any institute or authority outside New Zealand recognised by the Board as sufficient, he has practised as a surveyor or a surveyor's assistant in New Zealand for at least six months, and is familiar with the Survey Regulations; or

"(c.) That he has practised as a surveyor or a surveyor's assistant in New Zealand for not less than eight years, possesses adequate practical professional knowledge and skill, and is familiar with the Survey Regulations:

"Provided that no application under this subclause (c) shall be granted after the 1st day of March, 1898."

By the last paragraph it will be seen that, after a given time, such cases will no longer come under the consideration of the Board.