

Office Work.—During the year twenty-three plans have been received from surveyors, checked and passed, leaving no arrears of examination on our hands of current work, but there are still a number of plans unrecorded.

The work done by this office for the Property Tax Department has been very heavy, two of the draughtsmen having been engaged for about three months on the work, and it will take another month to finally complete the road districts, town districts, and ridings in the several counties, leaving the Sydenham, St. Albans, and Kaiapoi Boroughs yet to be done.

The foregoing work has been the cause of our arrears increasing, which it is hoped, with the assistance of the extra draughtsmen asked for, will be overtaken at an early date.

The most important and urgent work of the year has been the checking of the surveyors' plans and preparation of copies for photo-lithographing, and of schedules, in connection with the several properties acquired for settlement, and a large amount of miscellaneous work attached to the same.

I was transferred from the Marlborough District as from the 1st January, 1897, but I did not commence my duties regularly here until the 6th February. Between that date and the 31st March I have spent nine days in the country on various duties.

SIDNEY WEETMAN, Chief Surveyor.

OTAGO.

Minor Triangulation and Topographical.—During the year no work was done under this heading.

Topographical Survey for Selection.—Mr. McCurdie completed a topographical survey of the large Tautuku Native Reserve, and Mr. Neill completed the subdivision of part of Run 260B into small grazing-runs.

Rural and Suburban.—The bulk of the work performed for the year is under this heading. The total area subdivided for settlement amounted to 41,204 acres. Of this area, 15,022 acres were under the Land for Settlements Act, and was made up as follows: Tokarahi Estate, 12,175 acres; Waihemo Grange, 2,574 acres; and Thomson's Estate (East Taieri), 273 acres. Boundary-plans and sale-plans were made of these estates, in addition to the ordinary working-plans. On the sale-plan of the Tokarahi Estate Mr. Langmuir showed all the cultivated land. Although entailing a great deal of extra labour, this will be of great assistance to intending applicants. Of the remainder, 1,700 acres were occupation leases near Livingstone, and were very intricate surveys. Mr. Wilmot's area is made up of various applications scattered all over his district. Mr. Calder subdivided for settlement several runs in Naseby, Maniototo, and Gimmerburn districts, having a total area of 9,635 acres. Mr. McCurdie completed the subdivisional survey of the large Tautuku Native Reserve, containing 9,000 acres. In connection with this survey the lines were cut right through the bush, not merely the ranging lines. Mr. Edie completed portion of Block XIV., Rimu district, all heavy bush-country.

Gold-mining Surveys.—During the year 222 mining applications were surveyed, having an area of nearly 10,000 acres. These applications had to be surveyed within six months of the date of applications, and, as the staff surveyors were all engaged on settlement surveys, the majority of the applications were put in the hands of private surveyors, who, I am pleased to say, did their utmost to have the applications surveyed within the prescribed time. Now that the rush of applications is over, I anticipate that the staff surveyors will be able to keep this work well in hand.

Roads and Railways.—Mr. Langmuir levelled eight miles and a half of roads on the Ardgowan Estate. His cost of £17 18s. 7d. per mile includes fifteen longitudinal and twenty-six cross-section sheets, all the necessary specifications, as well as the supervision, &c., of the whole of the work. Mr. Neill made a flying survey of the road from Berwick to Waipori, and levelled several roads in the Catlin's district. Mr. Edie took levels of eight miles of roads in the Catlin's and Glenomaru districts.

Other Work.—The principal item under this heading is the cost of inspecting and reporting on the various applications for land in Naseby and adjoining district.

Proposed Operations for 1898.—Mr. Langmuir will finish the subdividing of Tokarahi Estate in about a month, and will then be available for further work under the Land for Settlements Act. When Mr. Wilmot returns from the west coast it will take him some time to overtake the work in his district. Mr. Calder has several runs in his district to subdivide for settlement. He will also have several mining applications to survey. Mr. McCurdie will finish the subdivision of Block XII., Tautuku, and will then commence Block X., on the north side of the main Catlin's-Waikawa Road. Mr. Neill has on hand the subdivision of Runs 260A and 260B in the Mount Hyde and Lee Stream districts. Mr. Edie will level several roads in the Catlin's, Glenomaru, and Woodland districts, and will then continue the survey of Block XIV., Rimu.

Office Work.—Mr. Adams left this district on the 4th January to take up the duties of Chief Surveyor and Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Marlborough District. The office staff have been very busy since January preparing new valuation-maps for the Land-tax Department. I am pleased to report that all the officers have worked exceedingly well, and will have all the maps completed within the prescribed time. Since taking up my duties here I have visited various parts of the district in connection with survey and roadworks, and as soon after the close of this month as I can make it convenient I intend visiting all the districts now unknown to me and the various survey parties under my control, thereby making myself better acquainted with the land district generally. Before concluding this report, I would herein beg to thank all the office staff and field officers for the very ready and able assistance accorded me on all occasions since my appointment here.

JOHN HAY, Chief Surveyor.