

There were twenty-one sittings of the Court during the year, with five sittings of the Appellate Court. One outstanding feature of the work of the Court was the number of partition orders made. The reason for the increase was the necessity to obtain and to clarify titles to sites by those contemplating the building of homes. The business of the Court shows an increase in all types of orders over the last few years, the cases notified being the highest since 1941. The number of succession orders has continued fairly constant for a number of years, but the number of other orders has decreased over the past ten years, the sharpest decline being in the number of charging-orders.

Rates collected showed an appreciable result, the percentage in one county being 97.3. Although the percentage in the Wairoa County was only 51, nevertheless it compares very favourably with the 22 per cent. collected five years ago. It is considered that most of the outstanding rates are owing on unoccupied and uneconomic holdings.

The Board has continued its normal function of collecting rentals on behalf of Maori owners of land leased and distributing the rentals to the beneficiaries entitled thereto. The Board has recently undertaken the administration of a large number of receivership orders granted by the Court in respect of rate-charging orders in the Uawa County.

In addition to the three stations mentioned in last year's report, which have all had a very satisfactory season, the Board has during the course of the year, at the request of the Maori owners, bought out the lessee of the Ohuia Blocks, near Wairoa, and is now farming Ohuia Station, comprising 2,403 acres, on behalf of the owners. The results of the first season's operations are encouraging, and if proposed drainage schemes can be put into effect much land now subject to periodic flooding can be brought to a high state of production and usefulness.

The administration of thirteen stations on behalf of the Maori Trustee has been continued. With a continuance of high prices for wool and meat satisfactory returns have been obtained, and there will be in most cases a corresponding reduction in the indebtedness to the Maori Trustee. Two stations, however, are believed to be uneconomic, and the question of their disposal is under consideration.

The Board's investments on mortgage security of Maori lands have been increased by over £4,000 during the year. The majority of these advances have been made for the purpose of assisting the farming operations of Maori farmers.

The Board has been fortunate in acquiring the library of the late Mr. H. R. H. Balneavis, a former Private Secretary of the Minister of Maori Affairs, and has since also acquired a valuable collection of books from Mr. J. H. Cato. With the addition of other books, the Board now owns a very valuable and informative library of books on the early history of New Zealand, the Maori and Maori customs, &c. The whole collection is to be known as the Balneavis Memorial Library.

Donations from Board funds during the year totalled £121, specific donations being:—

|  |    |    | £    | s. | d. |
|--|----|----|------|----|----|
| Contributions to cost of revision of the Maori Bible | .. | .. | 50   | 0  | 0  |
| Donation towards Whakaruia Memorial Hall             | .. | .. | 50   | 0  | 0  |
| Donation to Gisborne District Health Camp            | .. | .. | 10   | 10 | 0  |
| Donation to the New Zealand Tuberculosis Association | .. | .. | 10   | 10 | 0  |
|  |    |    | £121 | 0  | 0  |

The recently decentralized estates administration has resulted in more frequent personal contact with beneficiaries in the various estates and at the same time has enabled a speedier and more personal service to those who in the past were unable to travel to Wellington to discuss their business affairs.