

They are, however, on the way. I would like also to be permitted to point out that these and many other entirely new matters are being carried out with the same staff as formerly; whilst even the former ordinary general business of the office has largely increased as the tables will show.

Repairs to Maps, &c.—On taking charge of this land district I found that a number of plans were in a very dilapidated state through wear and age, and I at once took steps to prevent these records (the value of which cannot be estimated in money) from going to destruction, and up to now 380 plans have been mounted, and 285 block sheets, as well as twenty-four record-maps, repaired and bound with silk. There is still a very large number to overtake, but those requiring immediate attention have been made, at any rate, safe and serviceable.

Amalgamation of Offices.—During my predecessor's time the Lands and the Survey branches were carried on under different heads, with separate records for each. I found it more conducive to economical working and general efficiency to have them amalgamated. The entire clerical staff is therefore under Mr. Bannister, the Chief Clerk, with one set of Lands and Survey records. On the same lines all land and survey inquiries, applications for land, &c., are now attended to in one common public room by the officer in charge there.

Miscellaneous.—Besides the ordinary routine work of the office (which includes the attending and affording information to the public; supplying other Departments and local bodies with information; preparing working-tracings and 20-chain outline boundary plots for all the surveyors now engaged at the provisional survey of land for settlements in the land district, so as to facilitate and assist surveyors to get provisional plans in promptly; reducing, registering, and recording plans received) much other work was undertaken not mentioned in detail above. 489 tracings were made for the Valuer-General; 178 schedules of reserves according to local bodies' districts boundaries, illustrated by forty-five coloured lithos, were compiled and supplied to the Agricultural Department.

Departmental Changes: Death.—This branch of the Department has lost the services of Mr. Thomas Oldfield, one of the most hard-working and respected field surveyors. His end, which gave a great shock to all his friends, came suddenly in the early morning of the 20th October last, just as he was beginning the labours of the day in the bush, answering the "great roll-call" in harness and at his post, and in one of the wildest corners of Taranaki, away back at the head-waters of the Whenuakura River. The son of a general in the Imperial Army, who was also a Crimean veteran, Mr. Oldfield, after being educated at Sandhurst with the intention of entering the army, came to New Zealand when quite a young man during the period of the early Maori wars; when, true to the traditions of his race, he joined the colonial Forces during the struggle, rising to the rank of sergeant-major in the Armed Constabulary, from which he retired with credit in 1874. Later on he went into mining and other speculations, spending a small fortune in endeavouring to develop the Taranaki ironsand, in which to the day of his death he was a great believer. Later on, his Sandhurst training coming to his aid, he studied surveying, and worked at this profession in Auckland and Taranaki, joining the staff here in 1898. He served in his day his adopted country well, and he passed away respected by all.

Retirements.—On the 30th September last Mr. L. C. Sladden, temporary surveyor, resigned his position, and his resignation was accepted with much regret. He was one of our most zealous and conscientious surveyors, and joined the service as a cadet in 1887, being trained under Mr. District Surveyor Brodrick, in Canterbury. In view of the urgent surveys during the last few months his loss has been much felt. Mr. Sladden has gone into private practice in New Plymouth, and I was fortunate enough to secure his services under contract for the Spotswood Settlement survey, which he completed with great promptitude. A loss of just as severe a character was that of Mr. R. W. Watson, Assistant Surveyor, who had been trained in this branch of the Department, having joined as a cadet in February, 1894, Mr. District Surveyor Bullard being the teaching surveyor. The allurements of South Africa proved too much for him, and he left to try his luck in that region in September last. He was a young surveyor, of marked ability, with a special capacity for rapid and accurate work in broken country, and I feel sure that he will do New Zealand credit in the land of his adoption.

I need hardly say that these unlooked-for events, and, in the interests of quick settlement, the sudden change from an actual to a provisional survey system during the last four months of the year, are accountable for a much lower output of completed surveys than would otherwise have been the case; added to this the usual summer working season, so far as the weather was concerned, has been almost the wettest on record.

In conclusion, it again gives me much pleasure to acknowledge and place on record my appreciation of the loyal and zealous assistance accorded to me during a very busy year from the entire staff. My thanks are also due to the Land Transfer surveyors outside of the Department for the prompt manner in which they have carried out any requisitions made upon them, as well as for their cordial co-operation with me in regard to all professional matters.

JAMES MACKENZIE, Chief Surveyor.

WELLINGTON.

Owing to the urgent call, upon which all the field officers were at once transferred from the works they were engaged upon, to the preparation of blocks of land for selection and settlement at a late period of the year, a very large portion of the work due has to be returned as incomplete at the 31st March, in that plans thereof have not been received, nor, as regards the new field-work, is the field-work sufficiently advanced in many cases to enable areas of work finished to be given. Work to the value of £7,192 15s. 7d. is thus carried forward. The blocks being prepared are dealt with under the proper heading below.