

SURVEYS UNDER "THE MAORI LANDS ADMINISTRATION ACT, 1900."

Application was made to the Department last January to assist the Aotea Maori Land Council (Wanganui) to survey and prepare for sale about sixty thousand acres of land included in the Ohotu Block, situated between the Wanganui and Wangaehu Rivers, and extending from the Waimarino Settlement southwards to the older settlements near the coast.

Four surveyors were at once detailed for the duty, with instructions to make the necessary preliminary surveys, so as to open the block for lease at the earliest possible date. The land in question comprised hilly and undulating country with occasional small flats. The whole area is covered with dense forest, and, though some portions are rather steep and broken, a considerable part is of good quality, when cleared and laid down in grass, being equal to much of the lands already opened for settlement in the Wellington Land District.

Under the provisions of the Act, the lands have to be opened for lease for a term of twenty-one years, renewable. The great drawback, in the first instance, will be the want of roads, without which hilly forest lands are difficult of disposal, and much more difficult for the selectors to successfully clear and bring into cultivation. The operations under the Act are of great interest as representing the inauguration of a new system of dealing with the great Maori estate, so that it may not only prove remunerative to the owners, but that settlements may spread and develop thereon in the same manner as they have already upon the Crown lands of the colony.

Intimation has been received that Maori Land Councils in other districts will require the services of surveyors, and a staff officer has already been placed at the disposal of the Waiariki Council (Rotorua), and others have undertaken the surveys of Te Kuiti and Otorohanga Townships for the Maniapoto-Tuwharetoa Council.

ROADS AND RAILWAYS.

The surveys under this category aggregate 301·49 miles, and cost £15·29 a mile; and include the definition of roads to open up Crown lands, surveys of existing roads in settled districts, the laying-off of roads through Native and private lands, and surveys of new railway-lines to furnish land plans for the Public Works Department.

The mileage is distributed as follows:—

	Miles.
Auckland	107·83
Hawke's Bay	44·60 (Crown lands).
Taranaki	19·71
Wellington	40·85 (roads to open Crown lands).
"	11·50 (railway-line, North Island Main Trunk).
Marlborough	26·25
Nelson	46·50 (existing roads).
Westland	1·75
Otago	2·50

Total 301·49, at a cost of £15·29 per mile.

OTHER WORK.

The services falling under this designation are of a diverse but very utilitarian character, and include explorations, inspections, valuations, estimates, trig.-station repairs, miscellaneous and unfinished surveys, services and reports for the information of the Government and public generally.

GOLD-MINING SURVEYS.

Only 3,801 acres were defined under this head, comprised in 66 sections or holdings, executed at a cost of 5·14s. per acre. There were 38 claims, comprising 1,952 acres, in the Auckland District; only 6 sections, with an area of 326 acres, in Nelson; 13 special claims, containing 1,016 acres, in Westland; 3 lots, containing 215 acres, in Otago; and 6 areas, amounting to 292 acres, in Southland. This represents a diminution of 61 sections, and 5,672 acres in area, as compared with last year; the chief falling-off being in Marlborough, Nelson, Westland, and Southland, due no doubt to the abatement of the dredging boom.

LAND TRANSFER SURVEY BRANCH.

The plans of surveys for the purpose of dealing with lands under "The Land Transfer Act, 1885," numbered 1,428; the certificates of title, leases, and other instruments amounted