

Owing to the numerous and extensive areas of Crown lands which still remain in the North, Auckland claimed the first attention. This was the more necessary because two extensive estates—Bickerstaff and Matamata—comprising 51,462 acres, were handed over to this Department to survey and prepare for selection and allotment, consequently sixty-one surveyors were employed by the Department in that part of the colony. The other North Island land districts found active employment for eleven, fourteen, and twenty-two surveyors respectively in executing important surveys in the Ohura and Mokau Districts of Taranaki; the inland districts of Wanganui, Rangitikei, and Waimarino, of Wellington; and in the back country at Tolago Bay and Gisborne, in the Hawke's Bay District, together with the important Land for Settlements properties of Argyll and Wigan. The surveyors on the Nelson and Westland staffs were employed almost without exception upon similar surveys, so as to make all the Crown lands available for selection. A small staff was maintained in Marlborough to cope with the survey of the Flaxbourne and Rainford Estates and the subdivision of resumed areas and remnants of Crown lands. The Canterbury staff had to be supplemented to make headway with urgent surveys of the Levels and Highfield Estates, which were also acquired under the Land for Settlements Acts. Similarly, the Edendale Estate taxed the energies of the Southland staff for part of the year. Subdivision of resumed pastoral runs and other pressing surveys sufficed for the Otago staff. The distribution of the staff plainly indicates the localities where settlement on Crown lands is in progress. Concentration of effort has still to be directed towards the North Island and the west coast of the South Island.

Following the usual practice, the results of the surveys under the principal heads for the year 1903-4 are as under:—

#### SUMMARY OF FIELD-WORK EXECUTED.

	Acres.
Minor triangulation with topography ... ..	42,950
Topographical survey only ... ..	688,079
Rural and suburban section survey (1,836 lots) ... ..	594,535
Town-section survey (1,932 lots)... ..	2,131
Native Land Court surveys (151) ... ..	197,691
Mining surveys (57) ... ..	5,823
Roads and railway surveys (411.345 miles), cost per mile ... ..	£15,754
Miscellaneous surveys, &c. (cost) ... ..	£14,056

#### MINOR TRIANGULATION AND TOPOGRAPHICAL.

Triangulation was in abeyance, according to instructions, until settlement requirements had been satisfied. The area returned, 42,950 acres, comprises three small areas to control settlement surveys, and was consequently executed at a higher rate than if carried out in a systematic manner and on a large scale. Now that the great pressure is removed, I strongly advocate the resumption of triangulation in those localities where there is an undoubted demand and urgency for its prosecution. The Chief Surveyors, it will be observed, and, indeed, surveyors generally, are agreed that this class of work is an absolute necessity for the due and proper control of settlement surveys upon which are based the titles to land throughout the colony. One dispute involving appeal to the Courts might represent an expenditure and loss to individuals and the Government which would more than defray the cost of a trigonometrical survey of the whole of the adjacent district.

#### TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY.

There was a greatly increased out-turn under this head, which includes the preliminary surveys of roads and topography, and resulted in the preparation of plans of about 690,000 acres of land, and thus facilitated their classification, valuation, and subdivision prior to opening the same for settlement. The gross area is made up of 193,000 acres in the Auckland District; 42,000 acres defined by the Hawke's Bay staff in the back country of the Poverty Bay District; 114,000 acres returned in Taranaki, consisting principally of the Ohuru and Mokau lands, which were opened for selection recently; the Marlborough surveyors contributed 35,000 acres in the Flaxbourne Estate, for the purpose of supplying reliable information as to that property, which was the subject of adjudication by the Compensation Court. A large output of topographical and sale maps is claimed by the Nelson District, where nearly 227,000 acres were partly surveyed in several blocks throughout the land district; the remaining 76,680 acres includes some previously unknown lands in Westland, which had not been classified as regards soil, forests, &c. These operations were of great advantage, as they expedited the opening of Crown lands for selection through widely distant localities, and placed a large and varied choice of lands before intending settlers. From this class of survey we pass to the consideration of