

FLAX-AREAS.

No dealings have occurred in connection with the above, as flax is very low.

FIRES.

No fires of any importance occurred in the swamp during the past year.

SURVEYS.

Two survey parties have been actively engaged during the past year in connection with section and engineering surveys. Up to date the total area of lands surveyed into rural farms, town and suburban sections, and reserves is 30,159 acres, of which plans have all been completed. Of the above, 8,050 acres were surveyed during the past year. Surveys of various blocks of Native lands and roads were also effected. Further areas are now being surveyed into sections.

VALUATIONS.

Up to date, valuations of some 28,005 acres that have been subdivided into farm sections, different reserves, and town and suburban lots amount to £142,383. The balance of surveyed land—viz., 2,154 acres—has not yet been valued, but will approximate £9,000.

EXPENDITURE DURING YEAR.

Special, co-operative, and piecework contracts absorbed the sum of £19,287 15s. 11d., while on account of day-labour of all descriptions, on short or on floating plants, the sum of £13,307 4s. 2d. was paid out.

PRINCIPAL WORKS PROPOSED.

The principal works to be carried out during the current financial year are as follows :—

- (1.) Improvements to Piako River.
- (2.) Laying down of light railway-line.
- (3.) Continuance of road-formation.
- (4.) Completion of wharves, flood-gates, and bridges.
- (5.) Drainage development of new areas for settlement.

ACQUISITION OF NATIVE LANDS.

During the year some 1,027 acres of Native land was acquired, and was duly subdivided in connection with other areas of Crown lands on plains. A considerable consolidation of interests has thereby resulted. It is proposed to acquire a small area of 70 acres that affects one of the sections not yet offered. Sundry small pieces of land will be acquired for road-access to Piako River.

LAND PROPOSED TO BE OPENED.

It is estimated that about 3,500 acres of good swamp land in the vicinity of Waikaka, Waitakaruru, and Kerepeehi will be available for settlement during the current year.

An area of Crown and land-for-settlement lands, known as the Waitakaruru Blocks, and amounting to about 12,100 acres, is now being surveyed into sections, and will be duly roaded. As these particular lands are not, strictly speaking, portion of Hauraki Plains, but yet are a natural adjunct to same, arrangements have been made for road-construction by way of special votes and loans amounting to £5,000, as no moneys are available out of Hauraki Plains Settlement Account for the purpose. It is hoped to have some of this block available during the current year, as roadworks will be started very shortly.

OFFICE.

Both clerical and drafting staffs have had a very busy year. The drafting branch completed all plans of general-section, road-proclamation, and other surveys. Various photo.-lithographic tracings were made in addition to engineering plans and general work. The clerical branch has many calls of a varied nature, especially at pay-time.

The local Imprest discharged liabilities of contracts, workmen's and survey parties, and other charges, &c., amounting to £33,861 11s. Some 1,126 vouchers were certified for payment through local Imprest and Treasury. The number of co-operative and general contracts in operation amounted to 228.

GENERAL.

The attached plan shows clearly all operations up to end of year, and it will be noticed that a large scope of country is being dealt with. Every possible effort is being made to give effect to the Department's wishes that readily available land should be brought into profitable occupation at an early date.

Mr. R. G. Macmorran was during last year appointed Assistant Drainage Engineer, and has been untiring in his efforts to facilitate works, the latter remark applying equally to all of my staff, who have shown the utmost loyalty and attention in carrying out the desires of the Department.

I have, &c.,

J. B. THOMPSON.

Land Drainage Engineer.