

Some of these areas will only be suitable for grazing purposes, and later on a longer tenure should be made possible. The importance of these areas may be gauged from the estimated number of cattle at present grazing there—viz., two thousand.

#### SURVEYS.

Owing to the lack of land suitable for settlement no large areas were surveyed during the year. Surveying was confined to the subdivision of small blocks of Native land and engineering works. These latter were all necessary for the prosecution of the drainage of the plains.

#### VALUATION.

As no land was thrown open for settlement during the year under review the total value of land that has been subdivided and thrown open for settlement remains the same as at last March. The total area that had been thrown open was 38,994 acres, which at the time of selection was valued at £243,851. These totals do not include the value of land that has been utilized for road and drainage purposes.

#### WORKS EXPENDITURE DURING WAR.

Piecework contracts amounting to £4,322 2s. 4d., and day-labour works amounting to £6,434 1s. 5d., were paid from local imprest out of the Hauraki Plains Settlement Account.

#### METALLING OF ROADS.

The scheme for metalling the main roads on the plains, which was commenced in 1913, has been pushed on continuously through the year under review, the total distance metalled or shelled being now seventeen miles, eight and a half miles of which was done during year ended 31st March, 1916. In spite of the wet winter and spring the work was carried on without a break, at a slightly increased cost, however. This policy was advisable so as to endeavour to link up the metalling systems between Kerepechi and the Orchard.

The maintenance of these roads, as well as others on the plains, would be made much easier if settlers would only fall the bush adjoining the road.

As in the previous year, the Kauaeranga River, near Thames, supplied a large quantity of shingle, the total number of cubic yards being 4,854. This quantity was handled by the Department's own steamer and punts. The Auckland Shingle Company also supplied a scow-load per week during the greater part of the year, the total quantity supplied by them being 4,784 cubic yards. In addition Messrs. McCallum Bros. supplied 2,219 cubic yards of coarse beach shingle. The total yardage from these three supplies was 11,857 cubic yards.

The work carried out at Kerepechi consisted of the metalling of the Kerepechi-Turua Road east from the Landing for a distance of 2 miles 50 chains to the boundary of the plains, where the county have also metalled to; consequently there is now a metalled road from Kerepechi to the Thames Railway line.

Work was then commenced on the Kerepechi-Kopuarahi Road, starting at its junction with the Kerepechi-Turua Road and working north towards the Orchard. Some 124 chains of this road were completed, after which the plant was shifted to the Orchard.

One hundred chains of metalling were completed of the Orchard and Orchard-Pipiroa Roads, after which the plant was shifted across the river. At the end of March 100 chains of the Orchard East Road had been completed, and every endeavour will be made to link up with the metal on the Kerepechi-Kopuarahi Road, which will necessitate about a mile and a half of metalling. This section is most important, and the Orchard is the only place on the Piako River where stock are crossed; and, moreover, this is the point where a bridge is to be erected.

The approaches to the wharves at Hopai and Rawerawe were both metalled.

All the metalling described above was carried out by day labour, and the metal transported on the Department's own tram-line. The wisdom of having a tram-line was especially noticeable last spring, when the roads were so soft and would not have stood heavy carting at all.

The trucks are now showing signs of wear, and are gradually being repaired.

The punts used for transporting gravel from the Kauaeranga River to the Piako River are in fair working-order, and will be useful for years to come.

Near the cookhouse at Waitakaruru there was an old beach composed of shell and grit, which in olden times was used as a feasting-ground by the Natives, judging by the remains that are found there. Last winter experiments were made with this shell to take the place of metal on roads, with very satisfactory results. Since then 75 chains of the Waitakaruru-Pipiroa Road, commencing at the Waitakaruru Stream and working eastwards, have been shelled. Unfortunately the supply is limited, but it is estimated that there will be sufficient to shell at least another mile.

A length of about 60 chains of the Ngarua Road was also metalled with gravel from the creek at the western end of the road. This metal is very good, and will provide sufficient metal for all the roads in the immediate neighbourhood.

Following is a schedule showing the roads metalled or shelled during the year:—

|                     |     |     |     |     |     |     | M. | ch. |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| Kerepechi-Turua     | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 2  | 50  |
| Kerepechi-Kopuarahi | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1  | 44  |
| Orchard West        | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 40  |
| Pipiroa-Orchard     | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 60  |
| Orchard East        | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1  | 20  |
| Rawerawe            | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 5   |
| Hopai               | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 5   |
| Waitakaruru-Pipiroa | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 75  |
| Ngarua              | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 0  | 60  |
| Distance covered    | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 8  | 39  |