

Mauke (population, 444 Natives, four whites) and Atiu (914 Natives, two whites) are smaller islands, but very fertile, tropical fruits growing abundantly. Mitiaro is the smallest island of the group. It has a population of 208 Natives, no whites.

Of the upper group, Manihiki, the most important island, has 775 Natives, no whites; Rakahanga has 474 Natives, one European. Penrhyn has 312 Natives and two whites; Pukapuka has 474 Natives, no Europeans. Palmerston Island has 90 Natives, no Europeans.

In the white populations given above, officials and their families are included.

Land for Settlement.

The following are the areas of the various islands of the Group. It will be seen that the total area is 53,200 acres. It speaks much for the fertility of the land when it is realized that this area carries a population of 8,764, according to the last census, and exported goods to the value of £127,500 in 1919. No information has ever been obtained as to what area of land is under cultivation, or what is uncultivated and suitable for settlement, except in Rarotonga, as follows: Total cultivable area of Rarotonga, 8,000 acres; area leased to Europeans (half not cultivable), 1,700 acres; total area cultivated, 5,000 acres; area suitable for cultivation but uncultivated, 3,000 acres.

There are fifteen islands in the Group, having the following areas:—Surveyed: Rarotonga, 16,500 acres; Atiu, 6,950 acres; Aitutaki, 4,100 acres; Mauke, 4,600 acres; Takutea, 300 acres; Manuae, 1,520 acres; Rakahanga, 930 acres: total, 34,900 acres. Area (roughly) not surveyed: Mitiaro, 3,500 acres; Manihiki, 1,000 acres; Pukapuka, 1,000 acres; Mangaia, 10,000 acres; Palmerston, 1,000 acres; Suvarrow, 500 acres; Nassau, 300 acres; Penrhyn, 1,000 acres: total, 18,300 acres. Total area, Cook Group, 53,200 acres.

The whole area, which is scattered over a thousand miles of sea, is comparatively small, but owing to its tropical fertility it is capable of producing much more per acre than similar land in a more temperate zone.

The whole of the land of the islands, with the exception of a few acres owned by the Administration, remains in the hands of the Natives, who are forbidden by law to sell, although they may give leases up to sixty years. As Native landowners are unwilling to grant leases, it is difficult, if not impossible, for Europeans to obtain areas of any size for development.

Land titles in Rarotonga and Aitutaki only are fully vested in the Native owners, while titles in Mauke and Atiu are partly completed.

Customs Tariff.

The Customs tariff is the same as in New Zealand, excepting in the case of cotton goods and sugar, which carry duties, while claret is differently classified.

Population.

According to the census returns, the total population was—in 1906, 8,318; in 1911, 8,636; in 1916, 8,764; of which whites and half-castes living as whites numbered 140, 180, and 197 respectively.

From the above figures it will be seen that there has been an increase in population of 446 in ten years. Unfortunately, Rarotonga did not escape the influenza scourge last year. The epidemic accounted for the death of forty-five Natives.

Prompt steps were taken to prevent the spread of the disease to the other islands of the Group; all mails and passenger traffic were suspended, with the happiest results. Much praise is due to the Administration for the foresight displayed under such trying circumstances.

Schools.

There are eight Government schools now open in the Group, situated as follows: Four in Rarotonga, and one each in Aitutaki, Palmerston Island, Mauke, and Mangaia. These schools have rather more than eleven hundred pupils, under thirty teachers.