

LAND-DRAINAGE OPERATIONS.

During the year ended 31st March, 1927, some 1,165,291 cubic yards of spoil were excavated by floating and dry-land excavation. In addition, 47,115 yards of rock and 15,705 yards of stiff clay and rubble were excavated. Full particulars of the various activities of this Branch of the Department are given in Appendix III.

DETERIORATED LANDS.

Operations under the Deteriorated Lands Act, 1925, have continued vigorously, and the various District Committees have done excellent work. Up to the 31st March, 1927, some 1,539 applications were received under the Act. Reports to hand from the Revaluation Committees totalled 620, and 448 cases have been finally dealt with. In 316 cases reductions amounting to £107,184 have been made in capital values, and reductions totalling £5,837 were effected in annual rental and interest payable. Advances have been made to settlers in suitable cases, and liberal concessions granted by way of remissions of rent on condition that improvements are effected on the holdings concerned. The officers of the Department of Agriculture have afforded valuable assistance in advising settlers on various points, and every endeavour has been made to deal with the problem of these deteriorated areas in a thoroughly comprehensive manner. It has sometimes been possible to arrange for concessions on the part of private mortgagees; but in a great many cases the relief measures applicable under the provisions of the Act will be seriously retarded in their effect by the unwillingness of mortgagees to reduce their charges.

A demonstration farm of some 226 acres has been selected near Whangamomona, and suitable tenants installed. The farm contains sufficient deteriorated land for demonstration purposes, and will be farmed under the supervision of a Management Committee comprising the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the Instructor of Agriculture, Wanganui, and the District Valuer. Proper records will be kept, and days will be arranged on which visitors will be shown over the farm.

It is proposed also to provide a demonstration area or areas in the Auckland District, and inquiries are being made with a view to the selection of suitable properties.

ORAKEI GARDEN SUBURB, AUCKLAND.

It is intended shortly to advertise the first block of sections available for sale in the Orakei Garden Suburb. Probably monthly sales will be held, and an endeavour will be made to offer both high-class and medium-priced areas, in order to give all sections of the community an opportunity of acquiring residential sites. The first group to be offered will comprise about thirty-nine sections, ranging in area from 30 perches to 2 roods. These sections are very favourably situated, and when the railway has been opened and the waterfront road now under construction completed will be within ten minutes of Auckland City by train or motor. The views obtainable of Rangitoto, Waitemata Harbour, and the Hauraki Gulf are exceptionally fine, and the subdivisions, which have been laid out on modern town-planning principles, with ample reserves for the benefit of the public, are in every sense admirably adapted for residential purposes. Buyers will have the option of purchasing for cash or on deferred payments spread over a period of 34½ years.

Section 4 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1926, provides that, save in exceptional cases, lands disposed of on deferred payments as above may be declared by Order in Council as not capable of being transferred until improvements of such extent and of such character as may be prescribed have been effected thereon, or, on the event of failure to effect improvements, until not less than 25 per cent. of the price of such land has been received by the Crown. These provisions will probably be applied to the Orakei sections, in order to prevent speculation as far as possible; but the precise value of the improvements to be effected, or, alternatively, the amount to be paid before dealings are allowed, will require careful consideration.

LANDS RESERVED FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES.

Under the provisions of section 360 of the Land Act, 1924, and section 71 of the Land for Settlements Act, 1925, various areas of Crown and settlement land were permanently reserved during the year. The reservations made totalled sixty-four, covering an area of 2,781 acres. A summary of the work carried out under this heading is given below.

Purpose of Reserve.	Number of Reservations		Area.		
	made.		A.	R.	P.
Camping-grounds	1	1	2	21
Education endowments	1	11	1	22
Gravel and quarry	4	19	3	33
Government purposes	12	14	3	27
Municipal	1	0	2	39
Public hall and libraries	3	0	3	11
Recreation	17	125	0	16
River-protection	2	42	2	0
Roadmen's cottage sites	3	5	0	15
School-sites	14	51	2	35
Travelling stock	3	26	0	0
Water-supply and conservation	3	2,481	3	0
Totals	64	2,781	2	19

The above does not include areas that have been vested in the Crown as public reserves in town subdivisions pursuant to the provisions of section 16 of the Land Act, 1924.