

in settled districts, the Inspector is giving his attention to establishing reference stations in the vicinity of his verification surveys, which will prove convenient and economical points of origin and position for surveyors engaged upon Land Transfer and other surveys. The extension of standard surveys has already been resumed by Mr. C. A. Mountfort. I made numerous inspections of Crown lands, settlements, and roads, attended various land-sales, met the settlers, and conferred with surveyors and others at various points.

Miscellaneous.—The preservation of trigonometrical stations, and also of survey marks generally, is of the first importance, not only to the surveyor of the day, but also to the property-owners and the Crown; and consequently, since the initiation of the Otago system of survey by the late Mr. J. T. Thomson, staff officers have been under special instructions to repair, renew, and do all that is in their power to insure the security of these essential landmarks. Special circulars and instructions have issued from time to time; the winter season's office recess has been utilised in some instances for a systematic visitation of the stations of the local triangulations. Since resuming charge of the Wellington District special attention has been directed to this duty, especially by the resident surveyors at Manawatu and Wellington, and 181 points have already been inspected, re-marked, or repaired. As opportunity offers, the work will be prosecuted to a conclusion. Licensed surveyors have been good enough to report stations requiring attention in the settled districts where the staff surveyors are rarely found.

The trig.-station register referred to in my last annual report is still in hand, and in it are recorded the results of surveyors' reports on stations. Some trig. stations on the sand-dunes along the coast from Patea to Paikakariki have been totally lost. Many marked with 2 ft. long wooden boxes in the provincial days soon disappeared. Since then the iron tubes in lengths have been screwed together and driven in drifting sand or treacherous ground. In the settled districts, especially in the agricultural localities of the colony, trig. tubes have been ploughed out or removed; whilst in closely settled localities many points have been built over or planted off. The original survey and sectional pegs have been uprooted, burnt out, or otherwise destroyed. The effect of all this has frequently been demonstrated and discussed, and special attention has been directed to the difficulties and increased cost connected with redefinition of boundaries, the marks of which are so destroyed. These disadvantages are to some extent counteracted by the fixing of reference-points marked by iron tubes at about half-mile intervals in convenient safe positions along road and other traverses.

Proposals for 1900-1.—The proposals for the year comprise principally settlement surveys at Horowhenua, Retaruke, Kaitieke, Raketapauma, Motukawa, and near Tauakira. The Native Land Court surveys chiefly comprise orders of the Court in connection with Government land purchases, and Native orders affected thereby. The road surveys consist mainly of the survey and legalisation of roads in use and those necessary to open up Crown lands, or to complete the road system of districts where surveys are being effected. Regarding standard surveys, it is proposed to resurvey the Towns of Pahiatua, Hutt, Petone, and the Suburbs of Wellington and Masterton.

Office-work.

During the year under review the routine work of the office staff and special calls have prevented much progress in overtaking arrears. There were 165 working-plans examined, reduced, recorded, and approved, and these cover an area of 273,032 acres, subdivided into 421 allotments. The examination of surveys under the Public Works Act and for legalisation of roads was also attended to.

Compilations.—Nine Crown-grant and eight road record-maps were constructed; twenty-two plans for photo-lithography were prepared; and an elaborate topographical map of the Hutt County occupied the attention of one of our best draughtsmen for a considerable portion of the year.

Native Land.—Sixty-five plans, representing an area of 89,612 acres, were received into the office from staff and private surveyors, and ten plans were compiled in the office to enable the Court to deal with titles relating to 437,092 acres. A close investigation was made of the whole of the liens for costs of survey, and a complete register has been prepared, which has already been found of great convenience. The total of the Crown liens in 111 blocks, containing 375 subdivisions, amounts to £11,676 10s. 7d., of which the sum of £1,033 was recovered during the year. The titles prepared comprise 671 ordinary, 18 Crown purchases, and 55 memorials of ownership and authorities for survey. The whole of the Native reserves books in the Wellington Land District have been searched, and a complete return was prepared.

Reserves.—In previous reports I have alluded to the work which was in hand to decide upon and gazette the whole of the ordinary reserves in this land district. I am now able to report that the registers are complete, the reserves having all been gazetted, their purposes thereby determined, and the great bulk of those reserves which should fall under the control of the local bodies have been duly vested. The work of vesting these latter reserves will soon be brought to a conclusion. It is important to note that the State forest reserves have been increased during the year by the formal gazetting of 434,409 acres, chiefly situated in the ranges and uplands, embracing the upper portions of the watersheds of the principal rivers and streams in the Wellington Land District, thereby accomplishing one of the main objects advocated in special reports on the subject of forest conservation generally.

Titles.—The preparation and issue of titles have been attended to with promptitude throughout the year, the arrears on the 31st March last being only thirty-seven.

"Thirds."—There has been an unusual accumulation of "thirds" in the hands of the Receiver of Land Revenue. This has chiefly occurred in remote districts, where the Government from the first have been carrying on roadworks, and the local bodies do not make proposals for the expenditure of the amounts available. The Land Board gave considerable attention to this