

*Edgcumbe Block (6,300 Acres).*

(Control : Land-development Superintendent, Auckland.)

Development was commenced in 1937 on the Tarawera No. 2 and the Edgcumbe Blocks. These were amalgamated in 1938, the Orini Block and an abandoned small-farm section being added later.

The Orini Subdivision comprises 350 acres of good-quality but low-lying consolidated swamp land, while the balance is flat to undulating fern and manuka land covered with Tarawera ash, in its natural state presenting a very unpromising aspect.

The major portion of this ash land is surface-sown following clearing and burning of the surface growth. Some heavy stumping and cultivation were necessary on a portion, and a further area of very wet swamp had to be drained. A feature of the development of this land is the rapidity with which extensive areas can be handled, and it is anticipated that the coming year will see the completion of the major portion of the grassing programme.

The Orini Subdivision will be used as a change area, development at this stage being confined to draining, fencing, and stocking the reverted pastures.

The season's programme entailed the clearing, burning, and sowing of 1,500 acres in permanent pasture, and this work was well in hand at the close of the year. A heavy fencing programme is in hand, and on the Orini Subdivision the draining and fencing programme was pushed forward to a point nearing completion. Top-dressing of all pastures, being in the main hand-work, absorbed a considerable amount of labour.

Although permanent pasture establishment on this area is fairly rapid and dairying can be engaged in with success at an early pasture age, past experience in handling this class of land has shown that better results can be obtained by farming the land with dry stock until the red clover, which is predominant in the pastures in the early stages, is replaced with rye and white clover.

This land is exceptionally healthy for stock, and on completion of development can undoubtedly be successfully settled in reasonably sized dairy-farms.

A good water-supply can be obtained from two convenient sources, ample fall being available to permit of a gravity scheme.

Fifty men are employed.

Stock carried includes 97 sheep, 187 dairy cattle, and 629 run cattle.

Work completed to date includes the erection of one dwelling and fifty-four other buildings, 930 chains of fencing, construction of 483 chains of drains, 2,225 acres cleared and burned, and 1,264 acres sown in grass.

*Wharere Farm Settlement (2,590 Acres).*

(Control : Land-development Superintendent, Auckland.)

Development was commenced in 1933 on 960 acres of abandoned flax lease, a further 1,630 acres of similar land being included in 1938. Both areas are low-lying peat lands in the Waihi Swamp-drainage District, the peat varying in depth from 3 ft. to 8 ft.

On the first portion complete development as dairying-land is being undertaken, an electric pump being installed to maintain sufficient drainage for the lowest portions. On this portion six dairy-farms have been established, five of these being handed over to the control of the Commissioner of Crown Lands. Bullocks and sheep are being grazed on the balance of the area, and this grazing with dry stock will be continued until the land is sufficiently drained and consolidated to enable final grassing to be safely and economically proceeded with.

The main activities during the year have been the drainage and fencing of the area acquired this year in preparation for consolidation with stock, and the maintenance of drains on the previously drained areas. In addition to the schedule of work listed below, a grant for roading was expended, 190 chains of road being raised above flood-level by dredging. This road will also act as a protection from flooding.

Bullocks fatten exceptionally well on the established pastures. The present programme provides for the improvement and consolidation of the pastures already sown, bullocks being grazed on the areas carrying rough swamp growth and brought in on to the pasture lands for finishing for marketing. As it will be necessary to continue this method of farming for a number of years, this block can be used as a base for the development of suitable areas of vacant Crown land in the district. This procedure will economically effect a steady improvement in the land itself and eventually fit it for final grassing and settlement.

Thirty men are employed.

Stock carried : 579 sheep, 74 dairy cattle, and 757 run cattle.

Work completed includes the erection of seven dwellings and twenty-one outbuildings, 5,514 chains fencing erected, 2,424 chains drains constructed, 1,373 chains drains deepened, 507 chains roads formed, 869 acres cleared, 229 acres stumped, 860 acres grassed, and 2,217 acres top-dressed.

*Appleton's Section (56 Acres).*

(Control : Land-development Superintendent, Auckland.)

This section was part of the original Onepu Small-farm Scheme, being a fully equipped dairy-farm. On the death of the occupier during the year the Board decided to recondition the pastures and effect minor improvements before again settling the area.