

SESS. II.—1879.
NEW ZEALAND.

CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT

(REPORT UPON THE, FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE, 1879).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS to the Hon. the MINISTER of LANDS.

SIR,— General Crown Lands Office, Wellington, 10th September, 1879.

I have the honor to forward the annual report on the Crown Lands Department for the year ended 30th June, 1879. In the Appendix will be found, in a tabular form, the statistics of the land disposed of since the foundation of the colony, and the transactions of the year; also reports from the Commissioners of Crown Lands on their respective districts.

I have, &c.,

JAMES MCKERROW,

The Hon. J. W. Thomson, Minister of Lands.

Secretary for Crown Lands.

REPORT.

TABLE No. 1. brings up the summary of lands disposed of from the foundation of the colony to 30th June, 1879. A total area of 14,014,632 acres has been sold, and reserved for public purposes, the part sold realizing £11,210,412. There are 13,483,679 acres open for selection, and 20,828,885 acres withheld, being for the present, partly in pastoral leases and partly in temporary or forest reservations. The lands held by Natives, or sold by them to Europeans, were stated in last year's report at 16,500,000 acres. Of this area, 258,191 acres were gazetted during the year as Crown lands, 222,591 acres being added to the Auckland Land District, and 35,600 acres to the Land District of Wellington.

Land sold and disposed of during the Year.

Table No. 2 shows sales of—

	A.	R.	P.	Purchases.		
Town lands	404	3	7	to 1,138	Cash Received.	Scrip.
Suburban	2,585	0	37	„ 191	£745,827 13 5.	£19,864 6 4.
Rural	386,673	0	19	„ 3,243		

As in former years, the sales and receipts from the open grassy districts of the southern land districts greatly preponderate over the other districts, in which the Crown lands are mostly forest-clad: Canterbury alone represents, for the year, nearly three-fourths of the sales and receipts for the whole colony. The sales in this district were nearly all in the six months ended 31st December, 1878. For 1879 the sales have been very low, and they cannot be expected ever again to rival the returns of the last two or three years, as comparatively little of the land remaining in the hands of the Crown in this district can be deemed agricultural. It is, from its hilly nature and high altitude, mostly pastoral, and will not sell readily on immediate payment at £2 an acre. The same remarks apply to Southland, where the land is also open for free selection at £2 an acre.

In Otago the land sales are restricted to the hundreds, or to such runs or parts of runs as may have been withheld from lease. The land now offered, and remaining for offer, is generally more pastoral than agricultural, and does not go off readily at £2 an acre by free selection. It can, however, after survey and declaration into a hundred, be offered for sale by auction at an upset price of £1 per acre. Under this system most of the land sales for the year have been made.

In the other land districts, viz., Auckland, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, and Wellington, in the North Island; and Nelson, Marlborough, and Westland, in the Middle Island, the Crown lands are mostly under forest, and cannot be so readily or profitably occupied as open grass lands, and are not so much in demand. The aggregate area sold and receipts for these seven districts do

not amount, for the year, to one-tenth of the transactions for the colony. The returns for the current year are likely to be larger, as several large blocks, both in the Auckland and Wellington Districts, will shortly be offered for application.

Lands disposed of without Sale.

During the year ended 30th June there have been reserved for—

Recreation, school sites, gravel pits, and other purposes enumerated in the 144th section of "The Land Act, 1877" ...	A.	R.	P.
Education, under section 20, "Education Reserves Act, 1877" ...	*23,389	3	31½
Education, under sections 144 and 145, "Land Act, 1877" ...	15,945	2	33
Education, under "The Wellington College Act Amendment Act, 1878" ...	6,575	1	18
Education, under "The University Endowment Act, 1868" ...	2,973	3	12
	10,000	0	0
Total education reserves for the year	35,494	3	23
Endowments to thirty-two boroughs, in terms of section 350, "Municipal Corporations Act, 1876" ...	28,773	1	24
Total area disposed of without sale	87,658	0	28½

Settlement Clauses (Deferred Payments, Agricultural Lease, and Homestead).

The distinctive features of these several systems were described in last year's report; but attention must again be drawn to the fact that the inequalities existing between the terms of the deferred-payment and agricultural-lease systems are too great for both to work successfully in the same district. In the former the applicant undertakes to pay, in twenty equal half-yearly instalments, a total of not less than £3 per acre—it may be more, should there be more than one applicant, and the land go to auction—and there is a strict residence clause of six years, with improvements. In the latter there is no residence clause whatever, the improvement conditions are much easier, and there is only a half-yearly rent of 1s. 3d. per acre, with the option, at the end of three years, of an exchange lease, by which the rent is superseded and fourteen half-yearly instalments of 1s. 6d. per acre complete the purchase of the freehold. Unless the price of the deferred-payment land is lowered, very little future settlement will take place under it. Several blocks have been offered recently without a single application having been made.

The object of the settlement clauses is to insure that, in consideration of giving easy terms of payment, the country will become settled by a resident proprietary. The residence clause, personal application, and other conditions of the deferred-payment system, secure this as far as any enactment can. The agricultural-lease system, on the other hand, gives no such security. It is quite true that much settlement has taken place under it; but it is equally true that it affords facilities, which have been availed of by absentees and others, to get large areas in one holding. In such a case the beneficent purpose of the law—which is the encouragement of settlers with limited means—is defeated, and the Proclamations, leases, transfers, and other expensive routine of the agricultural-lease system become a most tortuous, cumbrous way of putting a man in possession of an estate, when it might have been done so much more easily by simply selling the land to him in one block in the first instance. The remedy is to reduce the price of deferred-payment land to the same as agricultural lease, and modify the regulations of the latter system so that after two years, residence will be compulsory when the land is agricultural. The deferred-payment system could then be applied more extensively, and the agricultural-lease system retained to meet the case of miners and others who cannot withdraw all at once from their present occupations.

The deferred-payment system was introduced in Canterbury during the year. An area of 7,393 acres was proclaimed open for application. Two selections, each of 320 acres, were made at £3 per acre. Of the area known as the railway reserves, about 2,300 acres were offered for sale by public auction on deferred payments, and 325 acres were sold to seven purchasers at an average of £8 15s. per acre; and at another sale, in August last, 337½ acres brought £8 13s. per acre. These lands are in the middle of settled districts, and close to the main trunk line of railway. At the same sales sections interspersed among the deferred-payment sections were sold on immediate payment—1,290 acres fetched, on an average, £5 1s. 6d. per acre.

Lands held on Pastoral License or Lease.

Table No. 6 shows that there are 918 holders of a total of 12,253,876 acres, paying, in rent and assessment, £111,000. There is a falling-off from the previous year of 120 holders, a million of acres, and £8,147 in receipts. This is due to the land sales in Canterbury, Otago, and Southland diminishing the area leased; also to upwards of 90,000 acres of educational endowments in Southland no longer being included in return, and to the severity of the winter of 1878 causing

* Of this, 20,000 acres were reserved for the Aorere Tramway, Nelson.

a number of high-lying runs in Otago and Westland to be surrendered or forfeited. In the Wakatipu Depasturing District, Otago, 21 surrenders, comprising a total area of 267,600 acres, have been accepted; and several more surrenders were forwarded from the same district, but were refused, on the ground that the applicants had a sufficiency of low country to work the high.

The Canterbury runs were re-assessed by Land Board in terms of Part VI., "Land Act, 1877," and the total amount of rent payable is more than doubled. After deducting land sold since date of assessment, and allowing for probable sales before the 1st May, 1880, the rent payable on that date will, it is estimated, be close on £60,000. This increase will more than compensate the deficiency already referred to.

In Otago 29 runs were re-let during the year, and in several cases at rents much in advance of what was paid under the old leases. Five or six leases, comprising about 180,000 acres in all, expire in 1881. But, as 112,000 acres are high school and harbour endowments, the Land Board will only (sec. 114, Land Act) have to deal with the balance during the current year.

Pastoral deferred-payment Lands.

Under the authority of the Land Act (clauses 75 to 85), six surveyed sections, aggregating 11,460 acres of classified pastoral land, in the Otago Land District, were offered for sale by auction. Five of the sections, with a total area of 8,910 acres, were purchased, at an average of £2 2s. 5d., per acre, payable in thirty half-yearly instalments. This is the first application of the deferred-payment system to the sale of pastoral lands. Considering that 4,000 acres of the land selected were on the steep sides of Mount Bengier, and the rest on the rough country of Silver Peaks, Waikouaiti, the prices realized are very satisfactory. About 80,000 acres have been recently surveyed into areas of from 1,000 to 5,000 acres, with the view of a portion being sold on this system.

Forest Lands.

As statements have been made from time to time conveying the impression that great waste was going on in the public forests from indiscriminate cutting down of trees, the Commissioners of Crown Lands were directed to supply information bearing on the subject for their respective districts. A reference to their reports will show that, while unlicensed cutting may take place to some extent in remote bushes, there is really no wanton waste. There is ample power given in Part V. of the "The Land Act, 1877," to frame regulations for preventing unnecessary destruction of growing timber, for regulating replanting of forests, for preventing the danger and spread of fire, and generally for the conservation of forests. As yet no regulations have been issued under this Part of the Act. The Land Boards issue licenses and administer the forests from Part IV. of the Act. In Southland a set of regulations under Part IV. are in force, defining the conditions under which licenses to cut timber may be issued. These regulations provide that no trees or saplings under one foot in diameter may be cut without a special license. The greatest source of danger to the forests is from fire catching the litter of branches and dried dead wood which remains after the forest has been cut over. It is very doubtful if it would be practicable to enforce a regulation that would obviate this danger.

The area of forest on Crown lands, exclusive of scrub, is estimated by the Commissioners as follows:—Auckland, 1,330,600 acres (of which 50,000 acres is kauri); Hawke's Bay, 177,270 acres; Taranaki, 695,000 acres; Wellington, 1,000,000 acres; Nelson, 2,725,000 acres; Marlborough, 220,000 acres; Canterbury, 190,000 acres; Westland, 1,900,000 acres; Otago, 1,421,000 acres; Southland, 500,000 acres: total area of forests on Crown lands, 10,158,870 acres.

Although the forests are invaluable to the settlement of the country, and supply the staple of the timber industry, they do not add much to the revenue directly, the total receipts from rents and royalties not exceeding £3,000 a year. Only the comparatively small area of forest in or near the settled districts has as yet been touched. There are vast areas of splendid timber where the foot of man has rarely trod, and which in time will get opened up by the saw-miller and the clearing of the settler. It is inevitable in many of the districts of the colony, where the forests are of great extent, that they must be felled and burned off, to make way for grass paddocks—indeed, this process of destruction is in operation every day. Under all the circumstances, the only precautions which seem practicable for the conservation of forests are—that the rangers see that there is no unlicensed cutting, and that the licensees are not allowed to scamper through the bush, but keep to such definite areas as may be prescribed in the regulations. The forests at the sources of rivers and on steep mountain slopes should be reserved from sale or deforesting for all time. As a case in point, it may be mentioned that the country around the cone of Mount Egmont for a radius of six miles or thereabouts is withheld from sale, and will be proclaimed a reserve as soon as boundaries are defined by survey.

Plantations.

Notwithstanding the vast area of forests in New Zealand, there are many districts utterly destitute of trees. Towards the encouragement of planting in such situations "The Forest Trees Planting Encouragement Acts, 1871 and 1872," were passed. Any one who may plant his land subject to the regulations issued under these Acts is entitled to a land order of £1 for every

acre so planted. Up to date, land orders have been issued to nine proprietors in Canterbury for 1,189 acres, and to three proprietors in Otago for 452 acres—in all, 1,641 acres to sixteen proprietors, as a bonus for planting about 750 acres of private land. In Canterbury, where there is a great extent of treeless country, and where more attention has been given to tree-planting than in any other part of the colony, the Provincial Government, in 1875, set aside a number of planting reserves, comprising, in all, 18,493½ acres. In February last, a Board of Managers was constituted for the purpose of having these reserves planted. The necessary means are to be derived from letting some of the reserves for a time, and with the rents planting from year to year as great an area as possible. The local bodies are taking a great interest in this business, and have voted funds to give it a start. Other circumstances are favourable to the success of a work which in a few years may greatly alter for the better the aspect of an extensive landscape.

Rabbit Pest.

This has so overrun the pastoral country as in some districts to have seriously curtailed the carrying capacity of the runs, and proportionately diminished the rents in those cases where it is assessed on the number of sheep. The evil is greatest in Otago and Southland, and some idea of its magnitude is afforded by the Custom-house returns of the number of rabbit-skins exported during the year ending 30th June, 1879, which are as follow:—From Bluff, 4,611,579 skins; from Dunedin, 528,432 skins; from Lyttelton, 62,854 skins: total export for New Zealand, 5,202,865 skins. It is manifest that this evil can only be abated by general concerted action over the infested areas. “The Rabbit Nuisance Acts, 1876 and 1877,” provide for the constitution of districts, trustees, levy of rates, compulsory destruction of rabbits, and the bonus of one half-penny for every skin exported that is the produce of a district constituted under either Act. Shooting, trapping and hunting, have been the means hitherto mostly employed in coping with the evil, but the great success of “poisoning by means of corn steeped in phosphorous and flavoured with oil of rhodium”* in Kaikoura District, Marlborough, and referred to in Mr. Goulter’s report, is being tried also in other infested districts with much success. Suffocation has also been successful in the Colony of South Australia, and in Southland. This is done by placing bisulphide of carbon in the burrows, and closing up the entrance with a sod. There is not the slightest doubt but that the evil will be reduced to manageable limits, and, as the country gets more occupied, it will get virtually eradicated altogether, except in the higher and more inaccessible back country.

Improvement of Lands before Sale.

In November last a sum of £58,500 was voted towards improving roads to Crown lands before sale. Nearly all the works contemplated have been entered on, several are completed, and others are under contract and will be finished early this summer. Immediately thereafter the improved blocks will be offered for selection. The improvement of Crown lands before sale, by rendering them accessible by the felling of bush and formation of road lines, erection of bridges in some cases, and cutting of main outfall drains in others, is absolutely necessary to the settlement of bush districts and of interior and back-lying country. It is quite probable that the outlay, in some instances, may not at once be repaid by the sale of land; but it will be so ultimately.

Departmental.

In those district offices where the land is mostly sold on immediate payment, there has been a falling-off in business, while in those where the settlement clauses are more in vogue there has been an increase. At the head office there has been received the usual references from the district offices, and correspondence from the public with the Minister of Lands. It is due to the energy and promptitude of Mr. Elliott that this multitudinous business is not allowed to accumulate or fall in arrear.

J. McKERROW.

* Recipe: “9 gallons water, 100 lbs. wheat crushed, 1 lb. phosphorous, 1 lb. sugar, 1 fluid oz. of oil of rhodium. When the water is hot, put in the sugar and rhodium, stirring well, then add the wheat; just before boiling, pour in the phosphorous, previously dissolved in a “billy” or saucepan of boiling water; stir well, and, as soon as the mixture boils, draw fire, cover up closely with wet sacks for thirty hours; it is then fit for use.” Remarks: “About a tablespoonful is sufficient for each bait laid. Rabbits eat this wheat greedily, but sheep do not touch it—hence there is no danger to stock.”—Correspondence, *Otago Witness*, 9th and 16th August, 1879.

No. 1.—SUMMARY of Lands Disposed of from Foundation of the Colony, with total Cash received, &c., for the Year ending 30th JUNE, 1879.

Provincial District.			Total Area Sold or Otherwise Disposed of from the Foundation of the Colony.			Total Cash Received.			Total Area open for Selection on 30th June, 1879.			Total Area remaining for Future Disposal, exclusive of Area in preceding Column, and of Native Lands.		
	TOWN.	NUMBER OF PURCHASES.	SUBURBAN.	COUNTRY.	NUMBER OF PURCHASES.	TOWN.	SUBURBAN.	COUNTRY.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.
									£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Auckland	51 2 6	74	177 2 15	9,704 2 39	14	2,202,482 0 39	365 130 1 3	1 10 6	15,417 2 24	2,370,744 0 0	0 0	2,370,744 0 0	0 0	0 0
Hawke's Bay	7 3 37	14	21 2 33	1,611 3 35	2	1,011,298 1 54	437 161 11 6	1 18 7	33,800 0 0	284,883 0 0	0 0	284,883 0 0	0 0	0 0
Taranaki	26 3 14	110	61 0 38	12,738 3 29	11	231,949 2 30	155,963 6 2	1 18 7	5,139 1 16	1,337,623 0 0	0 0	1,337,623 0 0	0 0	0 0
Wellington	18 3 16	22	1,342 1 10	6,762 2 9	25	1,862,167 0 0	753,916 17 5	2 2 10	22,244 0 30	1,125,977 0 0	0 0	1,125,977 0 0	0 0	0 0
Nelson	17 1 11	80	218 3 19	1,054 0 14	13	1,038,996 0 0	358 692 1 4	1 0 9	5,847,004 0 0	1,056,547 0 0	0 0	1,056,547 0 0	0 0	0 0
Marlborough	2 2 39	5	69 3 37	156 0 0	4	846,859 2 9	268 680 13 0	2 0 2	1,096,593 1 31	840,000 0 0	0 0	840,000 0 0	0 0	0 0
Canterbury	66 1 22	262	29 3 6	270,464 2 16	...	3,398,822 2 39*	5,737,503 4 6	4 6 9	4,458,653 1 30	2,657,709 0 0	0 0	2,657,709 0 0	0 0	0 0
Westland	7 3 8	44	227 3 30	2,038 3 24	7	141,905 2 36	56 886 4 9	1 5 8	246,145 2 17	10,928,915 0 0	0 0	10,928,915 0 0	0 0	0 0
Otago	125 3 27	222	435 3 9	52,744 3 33	29	2,224,747 0 25	2,044,876 18 10	1 17 2	206,978 0 0	218,457 0 0	0 0	218,457 0 0	0 0	0 0
Southland	79 1 27	305	...	29,396 1 20	85	1,010,403 2 22	1,031,601 15 3	...	1,551,701 2 18	20,828,885 0 0	0 0	20,828,885 0 0	0 0	0 0
Total	404 3 7	1,138	2,585 0 37	1,386,673 0 19	191	14,014,632 0 54	11,210,412 14 0	...	13,483,679 1 6	...	...	...	...	...

* 2,875,544 acres sold for cash, and 517,817½ acres otherwise disposed of.

No. 2.—SUMMARY of Extent of Crown Lands absolutely Disposed of for Cash, Scrip, or in any other manner, during the Year ending 30th JUNE, 1879.

PROVINCIAL DISTRICT.		NUMBER OF ACRES.						RATE PER ACRE.				CONSIDERATION		LANDS DISPOSED OF WITHOUT SALE.	
		Town.	Number of Purchases.	Suburban.	Number of Purchases.	Country.	Number of Purchases.	Town.	Suburban.	Country.	Cash.	Scrip.	By Grants or in any other Manner.	A.	R. P.
Auckland	...	A. R. P. 51 2 6	74	A. R. P. 177 2 15	14	A. R. P. 9,704 2 39	206	£ s. d. 63 5 10	£ s. d. 7 5 4	£ s. d. 1 10 6	£ s. d. 13,718 18 9	£ s. d. 6,208 18 6	...	...	...
Hawke's Bay	...	7 3 37	14	21 2 33	2	1,611 3 35	10	73 2 0½	4 1 9½	1 9 8½	3,067 9 6	...	6,721 0 0	6,721	0 0
Taranaki	...	26 3 14	110	61 0 38	11	12,738 3 29	181	158 0 0	5 7 0	1 18 7	24,661 14 5	634 11 6	2,014 2 28	2,014	2 28
Wellington	...	18 3 16	22	1,342 1 10	26	6,762 2 9	99	50 17 0	3 14 1	2 2 10	8,019 10 11*	11,153 4 4	2,114 2 8	2,114	2 8
Nelson	...	17 1 11	80	218 3 19	13	1,054 0 14	22	96 16 0	3 2 6	1 0 9	3,343 16 0	105 15 0	...	...	...
Marlborough	...	2 2 39	5	69 3 37	4	156 0 0	1	34 5 7½	1 18 8½	1 0 0	385 11 3	...	398 1 15	398	1 15
Canterbury	...	66 1 22	262	...	...	270,464 2 16	2,265	118 10 8	...	2 0 2	550,784 6 9†	...	836 3 10	836	3 10
Westland	...	7 3 8	44	29 3 6	7	2,038 3 24	27	40 11 0	4 7 6	1 0 0	2,333 2 3	150 0 0	1,801 0 0	1,801	0 0
Otago	...	125 3 27	222	227 3 30	29	52,744 3 33	366	38 17 0	13 7 8	1 5 8	74,433 17 8	1,298 7 0	275 1 10	275	1 10
Southland	...	79 1 27	305	435 3 9	85	29,396 1 20	68	85 11 0	9 7 6	1 17 2	65,079 5 11	313 10 0	...	...	...
Total	...	404 3 7	1,138	2,585 0 37	191	1,386,673 0 19	3,243	...	...	...	745,827 13 5	19,864 6 4	14,161 3 39	14,161	3 39

* This amount includes £65 paid by the Hon. the Minister for Immigration for land under "The Immigrants Land Act, 1873."

† Includes £3,373 18s. 5d. received from sale of 710 acres of railway reserves.

No. 3.—SUMMARY of LAND selected up to 30th June, 1879.

Provincial District.	Nature of Selection—whether Agricultural Lease, Deferred Payments, or as the case may be.	No. of Applications made	No. Approved.	Area Selected.		Average to each Selection.		Fees payable Yearly.		Rents Paid.		Total Land Granted for Conditions fulfilled up to Date.		Total Land Forfeited for Breach of Conditions up to Date.	
				A.	R. P.	A.	R. P.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	A.	R. P.	A.	R. P.
Auckland	Homestead selections	189	189	33,095	1 0	175	0 0	...	...	...	...	80	0 0	665	2 0
	Agricultural leases	173	100	4,959	3 7	49	2 15	248	0 0	...	...	...	...	300	0 0
	Deferred payments	382	379	30,803	0 30	81	1 4	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,810	0 0
	Under "Immigrants Land Act, 1873"	5	5	171	2 0	34	1 8	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Deferred payments	305	201	18,405	0 26	91	2 11	3,056	16 2	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Deferred payments & special settlement	249	249	58,377	3 0	234	1 32	5,218	0 3	46,441	19 8	45,256	1 35	100	0 0
	Under Leasing Acts	262	262	39,969	1 5	152	0 0	711	6 10	...	...	15,115	0 0	16,057	0 0
	Under ten-per-cent. clause	1,912	59	7,162	0 18	121	0 0	418	14 3	...	...	...	...	391	0 0
	Mineral leases	...	31	14,987	2 25	483	0 0	2,741	0 6	...	...	...	...	235	0 0
	No transactions	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Marlborough	No transactions	16	16	595	0 0	37	0 0	89	5 0	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Deferred payments	4,536	1,234	138,301	0 0	112	0 12	26,927	2 2	46,643	3 10	14,104	3 22	20,590	0 20
	Deferred payments	5,429	3,765	235,023	3 38	62	1 27	10,201	1 3	80,260	7 11	76,160	2 37	7,183	2 19
	Agricultural lease	522	257	37,634	3 20	146	3 0	5,322	13 0	2,319	0 0	790	0 16	4,393	3 26
	Deferred payments	13,718	6,747	619,486	2 9	...	...	54,933	19 5	175,664	11 5	151,507	0 30	51,726	0 25
Auckland	Homestead selections	21	21	4,360	0 0	207	0 0	...	...	...	...	...	...	450	0 0
	Agricultural lease	6	...	300	0 0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	230	0 0
	Deferred payments	36	36	3,257	0 0	90	1 35	442	19 5	3,668	0 10	142	0 0	...	...
	Under "Immigrants Land Act, 1873"	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Deferred payments	88	87	8,404	3 18	94	1 9	955	0 6	5,666	0 4	...	...	51	0 0
	Deferred payments	33	13	1,161	1 34	89	1 15	2,478	10 4	3,988	14 6	3,808	0 0	100	0 0
	Under Leasing Acts	14	14	2,680	0 4	191	0 0	88	11 3	...	...	584	0 0	2,092	2 24
	Under ten-per-cent. clause	118	21	2,358	3 34	112	0 0	193	4 1	...	...	...	...	307	3 13
	Mineral leases	...	1	97	0 0	97	0 0	2	10 0	...	...	...	...	4,346	0 0
	Reserves	...	3	44	1 2	15	0 0	16	0 0	...	...	...	...	...	...
Marlborough	Deferred payments	4	4	195	2 0	48	3 20	192	0 0	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Deferred payments	2	2	640	0 0	320	0 0	285	14 2	...	...	...	...	...	...
	Under "Public Reserves Sales Act, 1878"	7	7	324	3 14	46	1 25	64	2 6	89	5 0	10,197	0 7	2,362	2 25
	Deferred payments	10	10	690	0 0	69	0 0	4,942	4 5½	18,511	10 6	...	...	...	...
	Deferred payments—licences	203	67	13,133	2 5	196	0 0	1,259	4 1	629	13 6	...	...	...	...
Otago	Deferred payments—pastoral	16	5	8,909	3 26	1,782	0 0	...	...	2,427	13 0	1,897	0 21	...	...
	Deferred payments—exchange leases	20	†31	3,303	1 39	106	2 10	497	8 0	16,488	3 30	16,488	3 30	1,726	3 30
	Agricultural leases	169	85	9,700	1 7	114	0 19	1,214	12 6	19,152	9 9	1,988	0 28	871	1 21
Southland	Deferred payments	79	71	5,531	3 34	77	3 19	1,220	10 8	7,875	5 8	...	...	...	...
	Total under previous transactions	812	478	65,093	0 17	...	...	13,891	13 11½	52,008	12 1	35,105	1 6	12,538	1 33
	Totals	13,718	6,747	619,486	2 9	...	...	...	...	175,664	11 5	151,507	0 30	51,726	0 25
Totals		14,530	7,225	684,579	2 26	...	...	...	...	227,673	3 6	186,612	1 36	64,564	2 18

* General, 34, Fookes's Special Settlement, 53. † The Manchester Block is not included in this return. ‡ Includes 11 applications made the previous year || Exclusive of rent received for land taken up during the year: the total amount of agricultural leases during the year is £10,626 8s. 9d.

No. 4.—PARTICULARS of Applications to Exchange Agricultural Leases for Leases on Deferred Payments.

Provincial District.	Number of Applications to Exchange.	Extent.	Value of Improvements.	Extent Cultivated.
		A. R. P.	£ s. d.	A. R. P.
Auckland	...	...	...	...
Hawke's Bay	...	...	...	...
Taranaki	...	...	...	...
Wellington	...	...	...	...
Nelson	4	541 0 0	...	...
Marlborough	...	...	...	...
Canterbury	...	...	...	...
Westland	...	...	...	...
Otago	31	3,303 1 39	...	...
Southland	1	104 3 10	...	...
Total	36	3,949 1 9	...	...

PARTICULARS of Applications to Convert Leaseholds into Freeholds.

Provincial District.	Number of Applications to Convert.	Extent.	Value of Improvements.	Extent Cultivated.
		A. R. P.	£ s. d.	A. R. P.
Auckland	...	...	...	...
Hawke's Bay	...	...	...	...
Taranaki	...	...	...	...
Wellington	...	...	...	...
Nelson	10	816 3 15	...	...
Marlborough	...	...	...	...
Canterbury	...	...	...	...
Westland	1	30 0 0	200 0 0	30 0 0
Otago	243	25,279 2 21	...	...
Southland	10	1,988 0 28	3,151 0 0	400 0 0
Total	264	28,114 2 24	3,351 0 0	430 0 0

No. 5.—NUMBER and Area of Pastoral Licenses issued during the Year ending 30th June, 1879.

Provincial District.	Number of Holders.	Area.	Number of Stock.	Rent.	License Fees.	Total Rent per Acre.
		A. R. P.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	d.
Auckland	8	35,817 0 0	Not known.	95 0 0	...	0½
Hawke's Bay	1	1,872 0 0	400	81 0 0	3 3 0	10½
Taranaki	...	...	...	...	...	...
Wellington	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nelson	5	4,472 0 14	Not known.	126 5 6	...	6½
Marlborough	2	3,800 0 0	600	18 11 8	6 10 0	1½
Canterbury	1	12,000 0 0	Not known.	136 7 0	...	2½
Westland	2	31,000 0 0	...	34 11 8	...	½
Otago	...	...	...	...	...	...
Southland	1	3,000 0 0	Not known.	12 10 0	...	1
Total	20	91,961 0 14	...	504 5 10	9 10 0	...

No. 6.—LANDS held under Pastoral License or Lease on 30th June, 1879.

Provincial District.	Number of Holders.	Area approximately.	Average Area to Each.	Stock Depastured (approximate).	Rent Paid.	License Fees.	Total Payments.	Average per Acre.
		A.	A. R. P.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	s. d.
Auckland	18	127,417	7,078 0 0	Not known.	157 10 0	...	157 10 0	0 0½
Hawke's Bay	17	93,682	5,510 2 33	28,000	318 4 8	3 3 0	321 7 8	0 0½
Taranaki	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Wellington	1	500	...	800	52 0 0	...	52 0 0	2 1
Nelson	93	539,478	5,800 3 15	Not known.	4,246 8 3	...	4,246 8 3	0 1½
Marlborough	77	1,078,470	14,006 0 0	152,500	4,282 3 8	6 10 0	4,436 13 8	0 1
Canterbury	429	3,205,728	7,474 3 26	1,300,000	29,202 15 3	...	*32,284 18 9	0 2½
Westland	26	265,580	10,215 0 0	{ 4,700 sheep 3,000 cattle }	525 16 0	...	525 16 0	0 0½
Otago	230	6,383,339	27,754 0 0	1,700,000	†64,109 3 0	...	64,109 3 0	0 2½
Southland	27	559,632	21,524 0 0	Not known.	20 6 8	4,846 4 11	4,866 11 7	0 2
Total	918	12,253,876	...	...	102,914 7 6	4,855 17 11	111,000 8 11	...

* This includes £3,050 of arrears, and £32 3s. 6d. of fines on overdue rents.

† Includes £8,037 16s. 6d., being rent, in advance, of twenty-nine runs re-let during the year.

No. 7.—NUMBER and Area of Leases and Licenses, other than Agricultural and Pastoral, issued during the Year ending 30th June, 1879, and Revenue therefrom.

Provincial District.					Area leased.			Rent and Royalty.		
					A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
Auckland	...	...	...	...	83	1	15	780	19	4
Hawke's Bay	...	...	...	...	20	1	18	56	0	0
Taranaki	...	...	...	...	105	0	0	15	0	0
Wellington	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nelson	...	...	...	...	97	0	0	2	10	0
Marlborough	...	...	...	...	1,875	0	0	*	...	...
Canterbury	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Westland	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	†180	0	0
Otago	...	...	...	...	2,177	2	13	736	7	0
Southland	...	...	...	...	12,236	0	39	1,947	0	1
Total	...	...	...	...	16,594	2	5	3,717	16	5

A 10th of 4d. per 100 feet on all timber cut.

† These are not for particular areas.

No. 8.—NUMBER of Licenses revoked during the Year ending 30th June, 1879.

Provincial District.	Description of Licenses Forfeited or Revoked.	At Licensee's Request.	For Non-payment of Fees.	Non-compliance with and Violation of Conditions.	Issued in Error.	Total Number.	Extent.	
							A.	R. P.
Auckland	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Hawke's Bay*	Pasture occupation licenses	...	3*	...	...	3	12,154	0 0
Taranaki	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Wellington	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nelson	Depasturing license	...	1	...	...	1	1,000	0 0
Marlborough	Depasturing licenses	...	2	...	...	2	5,950	0 0
	Cutting and removing timber	...	...	3	...	3	4,270	0 0
Canterbury	Pastoral	...	19	...	...	19	24,422	0 0
Westland	Pastoral	...	11	...	...	11	129,990	0 0
Otago	Deferred payment	...	...	13	...	13	2,362	2 25
Southland	Depasturing licenses	21	...	...	...	21	267,600	0 0
	Deferred payment	1	...	6	...	7	871	1 21
Total		22	36	22	...	80	448,620	0 6

* In addition to above three, occupation licenses over about 6,810 acres expired during the year.

No. 9.—RETURN of Crown Grants dealt with in the General Crown Lands Department during the Year ending 30th June, 1879.

Draft Grants Received.	Executed and Despatched.	Cancelled and others issued in lieu thereof.	Corrected.	Antevested.	Duplicates Issued.
3,304	3,680	13	25	9	5

AUCKLAND.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

1. *Lands absolutely Disposed of.*

A COMPARISON of last year's return under this heading with that of the preceding year shows the former to great disadvantage, notwithstanding that a contrary result was looked forward to, and with some degree of confidence, at the commencement of the last financial year. The area stated (9,933 acres 3 roods 20 perches) falls very far short indeed of that which was anticipated as the probable sales for the year; and, although the causes which led to this were somewhat fully explained to you in my memorandum of the 20th May last, they may not, I think, be inappropriately reproduced here. They are the following, viz.—

1. The withdrawal from the administration of the Land Board of the whole of the Waikato confiscated lands—town, suburban and rural.

2. The locking-up for a considerable time of a large and valuable area of the Patutahi Block as endowments for municipal purposes.

3. The delay (doubtless unavoidable) in the transference to the Board of the Waiharakeke and Te Puke Blocks.

4. The non-completion of the surveys of the Aroha and Taramarama Blocks, arising from Native and other unexpected difficulties; and

5. Unanticipated delays which have taken place in carrying out certain road works undertaken to give access to several tracts of surveyed land in the Hokianga and Whangape Districts.

When I state that the blocks above mentioned, embracing as they do a very extensive area, and offering unusual inducements to intending purchasers, were the subject of constant inquiry and application, it will be readily understood that the marked diminution observable in the sale of land for the year is only such as their retention from the market was calculated to produce.

2. *Lands selected under Settlement Clauses.*

The proceedings which have taken place under these clauses have, as in the case of last year, been confined solely to the homestead provisions of the Land Act. Particulars of these are given in Return No. 3.

The comparatively high price required in the case of deferred-payment land, added to the difficulty experienced in selecting blocks adapted, both as regards quality and accessibility, to the requirements of this system, have hitherto proved a barrier to its being brought into operation.

These requirements, however, the Aroha and Te Puke Blocks, soon to be dealt with, are expected to satisfy, and in each the system will shortly receive a trial, and with every prospect of being attended with success.

The number of approved applications under the homestead system is less than half that for the year 1878. Valuations under this system are periodically inspected by the Crown Lands Ranger, whose reports have hitherto borne testimony to the fact that the conditions imposed in these cases, both with regard to residence and cultivation, have, with few exceptions, been satisfactorily fulfilled. Indeed, in some instances, the improvements effected have largely exceeded the stipulated requirements. The cases in which failures occur to carry out the prescribed conditions are usually found to be those in which the homestead selectors are possessed of other land, in freehold or otherwise, and thus, from over pressure on their generally slender resources, are unable to cope with the demands which the working of two holdings necessarily entails upon them. To persons so situated this system was clearly never intended to apply, so that, were an amendment of the Act prohibitive of selections under such circumstances procurable, it would obviously not be unattended with advantage.

3. *Lands held under pastoral Occupation.*

The quantity of land held as above during the past twelve months exhibits a very large increase on that similarly occupied in the preceding year. In 1878 there was but 1 holding of this kind granted, containing 1,550 acres, while in 1879 the number increased to 8, and the acreage to 35,817 acres. These lands are leased for periods varying from seven to twenty-one years, but are all subject to a proviso for re-entry on the part of the Government in the event of their being required for purposes of sale or settlement: they are all third-class lands. I regret that I am unable to furnish any information as to the number of stock depastured on these holdings.

4. *Evasions of the Law, and Proceedings relating thereto.*

None have come under notice during the past year.

5. *Miscellaneous.*

There were 589 Crown grants and 8 licenses issued during the year. The number of grants prepared for signature was 460, of which 92 were in triplicate, and 368 in quadruplicate; making, in all, 1,748 copies. Where, in the issue of Crown grants, delays have occurred they are solely attributable to the unavoidable temporary withdrawal from this work of the officers engaged in its execution, in order that they might be employed on other services—notably the preparation of returns required in connection with the late Native meeting, and also returns of education reserves, both of which absorbed a large amount of time.

The total land revenue for the year contrasts unfavourably with the receipts for the preceding twelve months, the former being merely £20,866 6s. 7d., as compared with £52,547 7s. 6d. for the latter period. For the causes which have operated to produce this result the remarks made under the head of "Lands absolutely disposed of" will, I think, be found to sufficiently account. The following classification of the receipts indicates, with some particularity, the sources whence the total revenue was derived:—

	£	s.	d.
1. Land sales	19,927	17	3*
2. Depasturing licenses	157	10	0
3. Timber licenses and sale of trees	51	10	0
4. Temporary occupation of land	3	7	0
5. Royalty on manganese	49	9	0
6. Rent on Manganese Mine, Waiheke.	10	0	0
Coal lease, Bay of Islands Coal Company	666	13	4
Total	£20,866	6	7

* Of this amount, the sum of £6,208 18s. 6d. is represented by scrip.

The area of the Crown forest lands in this district is estimated at 1,330,600 acres. These figures may, I think, be accepted as a tolerably close approximation to accuracy. Of this area, it is estimated that fully 50,000 acres are covered with valuable kauri timber. Unlicensed timber-cutting is much less frequent now than in former years, the spread of settlement having done a great deal to check such proceedings by making the names of offenders known to this office, and thus enabling prompt measures to be taken for the suppression of such acts. Two cases of this nature occurred during the year, and were each visited with the infliction of a pecuniary penalty. The Crown forests are believed to have suffered comparatively little either from waste or fire during the past twelve months, and, although several reports reached me of bush fires during the summer months, in no instance, on inquiry, did it appear that Crown property had been injuriously affected.

Rabbit Pest.—This is a nuisance which may be almost said to have no existence in this district. One or two localities might be mentioned in which they have appeared in large numbers, but in no case have I heard of their presence constituting a serious evil.

Land Act.—The only suggestions, in connection with the working of the Land Act, that I have been requested by the Board to bring under your notice are the following:—

1. By section 46 the sale of any smaller area than twenty acres is prohibited. In this district there are a number of small and widely-scattered settlements (rural land)—the lands in which have been divided into ten-acre sections, and the consequence is that the prohibition as above is found to operate very disadvantageously. Numerous applications, which in the present state of the law cannot be dealt with, are obliged to be held over, thus occasioning much disappointment to intending purchasers. An amendment of the Act in this respect is therefore considered to be very necessary.

2. The second suggestion is one to which your attention has been previously invited. It has for its object the introduction of a clause in the Act to prevent selectors under the home-stead system being permitted to make more than one selection. For the reason given for the introduction of a restrictive clause of this nature permit me to refer you to the concluding part of my report of last year.

D. A. TOLE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

TARANAKI.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

1.—*Lands absolutely Disposed of.*

THE sales effected during the year 1878-79 show a considerable falling-off as compared with the transactions of the preceding year. This is attributable partly to the small area of land surveyed and open for sale, nearly all the surveyors having been engaged on the Waimate surveys; and partly, during the latter part of the period, to the unsettled state of Native affairs in this district. The effect of the uncertainty as to the attitude of the Maoris began to be felt in March last, and culminated at the end of May. The land sales, which had averaged about 4,000 acres per quarter for the first three quarters of the financial year, fell to 1,200 acres in the quarter ended 30th June, only some 140 acres being sold in the month of June. The total area of land alienated during the financial year, including land sold on terms of deferred payment, is 12,827 acres. The consideration for which it was sold was £25,296, including scrip to the value of £634 11s 6d. The amount of cash received on account of land sales during the twelve months was about £21,350. Besides this, a further sum of £2,085 has been received as second, third, or fourth instalments on land taken up under the deferred-payment system in previous years.

2. *Land selected under Settlement Clauses.*

Thirty-five applications have been made to take up Crown lands on terms of deferred payment during the year, of which thirty-four have been approved; the area selected by the applicants being about 3,405 acres, or an average of 100 acres per selection. Besides these, fifty-three persons have selected land on Mr. Fookes's special-settlement block of 5,000 acres, known as Midhurst; making, in all, eighty-seven selectors during the year. There are now 288 persons holding 26,810 acres on deferred payments in this provincial district, giving an average of 93 acres per selector. That the system has proved a success is shown by the fact that only one selector has forfeited by reason of non-fulfilment of conditions since the inauguration of deferred payments in this province in March, 1875; and still more satisfactory evidence of the thorough success of the system, and of the *bona fides* of the selectors, is afforded in the reports of the Ranger on the improvements made by each holder on his selection. By these it is shown that the improvements in the shape of clearing, cultivation, building, &c., exceed, on an average, by about 50 per cent. the areas or values required by the provisions of the Act. When it is remembered that nearly the whole of the lands taken up on terms of deferred payments in this district are covered with dense forest, these figures may be considered highly satisfactory. The steps taken during the present year (1878-79) to open the bush roads have proved highly beneficial to all the landholders in the forest districts, but more especially to those holding lands on terms of deferred payment. It has enabled many of these to occupy their land and fulfil the conditions

of the Act, who must otherwise have forfeited their allotments. Had more land been surveyed and available the number of selectors on terms of deferred payment would, in the three first quarters of the financial year especially, have been very largely augmented.

3. *Lands under Pastoral Occupation.*

Nil.

4. *Evasions of the Law and Proceedings resulting therefrom.*

Nil.

5. *Miscellaneous.*

One hundred and fifty-four Crown grants have been issued from the office during the year.

Two leases have been granted by the Land Board—namely, one in the vicinity of Stratford, for brick-making purposes; and one between Stratford and Normanby, as a site for an accommodation-house.

The land revenue for the year 1878–79, including fees on renewal of licenses to occupy, bond notes, &c., amounts to £23,571 4s. 8d.

Nearly the whole of the Crown lands within the provincial district being in standing forest, there are no sheep or cattle depastured on them. The area of Crown forest lands, including in the estimate the unsold confiscated lands, exclusive of areas returned or abandoned to Natives, is 695,000 acres. There is not much cutting by unlicensed persons, or waste of timber, on these lands: the waste commences so soon as the land is alienated.

Rabbits are not numerous in this district; fortunately either the soil or climate, or both, seem to be unfavourable to their increase.

I have no remarks to make on the Land Act in addition to those forwarded in my previous reports.

C. D. WHITCOMBE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

WELLINGTON.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THE small revenue from the sale of Crown land in this land district during the past financial year is owing, in part, to the delay in the expenditure of the votes of last session on the Palmerston, Mangaoni, and other blocks by opening up roads and cutting of drains.

The whole of the Crown land in this district may be classed as forest land, and is not likely to be purchased in large blocks for speculative purposes, but by intending settlers of moderate means, and provided provision is made for an expenditure on roads before sale it will greatly aid in promoting settlement.

The minimum price for which pastoral land can now be sold—namely, 20s. per acre—prevents any sales being effected.

The rabbit pest, so far as is known, has not hindered the sale of Crown lands.

The number of Crown grants yet to issue has been but very slightly reduced during the past year, owing to Survey Office arrangements, and the temporary removal of Mr. Telford, in March last, to the Provincial Auditors' Department.

The increased strength in the Survey Department will secure the preparation of a much larger number of grants than previously; but, until Mr. Telford returns, or his place is filled up by another, it will not be possible to complete them for delivery to the grantees.

The enclosed detailed schedules Nos. 1 to 9 will be found to contain full information on the various matters therein referred to.

JOS. G. HOLDSWORTH,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

HAWKE'S BAY.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THE area of lands disposed of, since first sales, to 30th June, 1879, is 1,011,298 acres 1 rood 5½ perches, for which £437,161 11s. 6d. has been received in cash, independent of payments by scrip.

2. The greater part of the land selected under settlement clauses is in *bond fide* occupation by the selectors, even in cases of land taken up under Part I. of "The Hawke's Bay Special Settlements Act, 1872," which does not compel actual residence. In many instances very considerable improvements have been made on the land beyond what is absolutely required. Since my last report the Woodville and Ormondville Special Settlements have been inspected. The holdings in the Woodville Small Farm Association Block have, with one exception, been passed as having complied with the conditions of occupation. Most of the members of this Association have made great progress in clearing and cultivating their allotments, and have erected good houses. In the Ormondville Special Settlement a few of the holders of land, having complied with the

conditions under which they occupy, have availed themselves of the rule which allows full payment of purchase-money before the time has expired when payment must be made. Some few have been unable to comply with the rules in consequence of the railway works in progress preventing free access to their allotments. In such cases, the Waste Lands Board has granted an extension of time for making the required improvements, or excused actual residence for a time. In all these special settlements many of the holders desire to pay the balance of the purchase-money so soon as the law permits them to do so, which, in these cases, is when certain conditions have been fulfilled, and may be before the full period of occupation is completed.

3. The lands held under pastoral occupation are generally of inferior quality, which from their position and distance from the port cannot be classed as available agricultural land. During the current year three licenses have expired by effluxion of time. The area unsold at the expiration of the licenses was made up of several small blocks which are isolated, and were not considered by the occupiers to be worth ten shillings an acre, at which rate they could have been purchased prior to January, 1878. Three licenses have been declared forfeited through the non-payment of assessments within three months of due date.

Evasions of the Law and Proceedings relating thereto.

4. I have reason to believe that timber in small quantities has been cut on Crown land. The Ranger has twice been on the ground, but was unable to find out who had transgressed. I do not know of any waste from fire, which seldom occurs except where the timber has been felled.

5. The land sales during this year have been less than was anticipated. No doubt the scarcity of money and general depression has proved a great obstacle to the sale of land, while the present price prevents its being taken up by free selection. The survey of the Mohaka Block alluded to in last year's report has lately been commenced. This land has been classified as pasture land and unfitted for agricultural purposes. As a considerable portion of this land and some other blocks are of indifferent quality, it may be advisable, in order to encourage settlement, to alter the law so that unagricultural land may be offered at a lower rate than at present allowed. The Waste Lands Board, having considered this matter at its last meeting, desires to recommend that the law relating to the price of land should be so far amended that, on the recommendation of the Board, approved by the Governor, land may be offered at auction at a less price than one pound per acre, and, if not sold, may be proclaimed open to free selection. The greater portion of the Mohaka Block is held under pastoral licenses at almost a nominal rate— $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per acre—the licenses expiring in about four years. These lands are very suitable for sale as pastoral land on deferred payments, but, under section 76 of "The Land Act, 1877," may not be dealt with in this manner more than twelve months before the expiration of the license. I would therefore suggest that this portion of the law may be amended, as well as that referring to the price of land.

Miscellaneous.

6. The number of Crown grants issued during the year is fifty-six. This small number may be attributed to the delay in preparation of draft grants in the Survey Office, which, I am informed, is occasioned by a press of work in that office, and some difficulty in fixing correct boundaries.

There being several small pieces of land in different localities which were originally reserved from sale, but not yet required for any specific purposes, the Land Board decided to lease some of them which would otherwise have been unproductive. Six of such leases have been granted. One pastoral license has been issued, and a license to occupy a ferry reserve, free of rent, has been issued to the Wairoa County Council.

The total land revenue received is £7,962 17s. 9d.

The estimated area of Crown forest land in this district is 177,270 acres.

I think I should bring to your notice that I am not aware of any steps being taken to complete the purchase of lands in the Seventy-Mile Bush over which the Native title has been nearly but not completely extinguished. This subject was alluded to in last year's report. The railway works are now nearly up to the Rakaiatai Block, which contains some excellent timber, and is becoming more valuable as the country gets opened up.

With regard to the rabbit pest, rabbits are reported to exist in considerable numbers close to the southern boundary of this district, and for a time appear to be stopped by the Akiteo River. It is very generally believed that several pairs have been purposely let loose on some of the lands near the Ngaruroro River, a few having been caught, ear-marked—probably for the purpose of distinguishing the sexes in the dark. These animals are increasing, and cause some anxiety to the runholders. A large quantity of Crown land is of a class that would afford shelter, and therefore encourage the increase of this nuisance. Should they do so to any extent, it will no doubt seriously depreciate the value of land, and entail a heavy expenditure to eradicate them. I am informed the Agricultural and Pastoral Society of Hawke's Bay is taking steps to endeavour to check the spread of this nuisance; but opinions differ very much as to the best course to be adopted.

J. T. TYLEE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

NELSON.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

Lands absolutely Disposed of.

ONLY 1,290 acres have been sold during the year, which realized the sum of £3,223 16s., the average price per acre being—Town lands, £96 16s.; suburban, £3 2s. 6d.; rural, £1 0s. 9d. Excepting in the Westport District, no lands have been offered for sale by public auction, and the high minimum price of land fixed by “The Crown Lands Sale Act, 1877,” has, to some extent, prevented lessees from purchasing the fee-simple of their holdings, the land in many parts of this district not being worth £1 per acre.

Land selected under Settlement Clauses.

Part III. of “The Land Act, 1877,” not being in operation in this district, the lands selected for settlement have been so selected under the leasing clauses of Appendix E. of that Act, which are better adapted for the settlement of the outlying lands of this district. Under these clauses, 8,577 acres have been applied for during the year, the applications being 118 in number.

Lands held under Pastoral Occupation.

The total area let during the year for pastoral purposes amounted to 4,472 acres—viz., three leases, under “The Nelson Waste Lands Act, 1874,” of blocks of over 500 acres, and two occupation licenses under clause 10, Appendix E., of “The Land Act, 1877.” The area held under pastoral licenses on the 30th of June in this district was 157,377 acres; and under leases, of blocks of over 500 acres, 282,101 acres: making a total area of 539,478 acres held for pastoral purposes; the annual rental being £4,246.

Minerals.

Copper.—Several licenses to prospect for minerals, other than gold, have been granted during the year, and some discoveries of copper have been reported. Steps are being taken to have the ore properly tested; and there is, I believe, reason to hope that the result will be very satisfactory, and that the ore will be found to be of superior quality.

Coal.—I regret that I am unable to report any large increase in the output of coal in this district. The Westport Colliery Company have not yet placed any coal in the market, owing to the non-completion of the very extensive works in course of construction for connecting the mine with the port of shipment. The lessees on the North Beach, Cobden, have failed to raise the company to work their leasehold.

Public Reserves.

I have already specially reported on the necessity for some legislation with regard to leasing reserves. A considerable revenue is annually lost to the Government owing to there being no means of leasing reserves upon such terms as would justify any outlay by the lessees. If the Land Board had power to lease by public auction for a term of years, say fourteen, a good rental could be obtained for the reserves in this district, and the land would be cultivated and improved.

“The Land Act, 1877.”

As pointed out in my report last year, sections 41 and 44 need amendment to meet the requirements of this district. The high price put upon town and village lands by section 41 practically withdraws all village lands in the interior of the country from sale, and stops settlement; and under section 44 town and suburban lands put up to auction and not sold cannot be afterwards sold at the upset price, but must be offered again from time to time by public auction. Rural lands cannot be sold for less than the minimum price payable for land open for sale for cash—namely, £2 per acre. This latter provision has already stopped the sale of several sections near Westport to *bonâ fide* settlers, who were anxious to purchase after auction at the upset price.

Some provision is also required to enable land submitted to public competition and not sold to be declared open for selection under the leasing clauses.

“The Crown Lands Sale Act, 1877.”

The high minimum price of land fixed by this Act has, as I anticipated, caused much dissatisfaction among the lessees and applicants for leases in this district. Many applications for leases have been withdrawn, and several leases have been surrendered, the lessees seeing no chance of acquiring the freehold at less than £1 per acre. That this high minimum has greatly retarded settlement must, I think, be admitted when the number of applications for leases received during the year is compared with the numbers received during the previous years under similar leasing laws—for instance, in 1877, before the Crown Lands Sales Act came into operation, 450 applications were received, this year only 118 have been received. I have therefore to recommend that the Act should be amended so as not to apply to the Nelson District. The minimum price then would be 10s. per acre, as provided by Appendix E of “The Land Act, 1877.”

Departmental.

The business of this department is steadily increasing, notwithstanding the falling-off of applications for leases under the Land Act, the renewal of agricultural leases under the Gold Fields Act, and the application for gold-mining leases, entailing a considerable amount of work. Every exertion is being made to work up the arrears of applications on the leasing books, and the surveys are now so far advanced that, I am informed by the Chief Surveyor, I may calculate on the issue of at least 200 leases and 200 Crown grants during the year commencing 1st July instant. Under the heading "Miscellaneous" will be found a statement of the number of leases and Crown grants, &c., issued during the year.

The land revenue for the year collected at Nelson by the Receiver of Land Revenue amounted to £11,842 5s. This sum is exclusive of rents on agricultural leases issued under the Gold Fields Act, estimated at £1,970, and rents of gold-mining leases, estimated at £2,430, making a total revenue of £16,242 5s. Of the above sum of £11,842 5s., the sum of £6,959 6s. 7d. was received for rents of leases and licenses.

Miscellaneous.

In addition to the returns asked for and appended hereto, I have appended to this report a statement prepared by the Receiver of Land Revenue, which will better explain the revenues derived from this district.

Statement showing Leases and Licenses in operation on the 30th June, 1879.

	Acreage.			Rental.		
	A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
"Crown Lands Licensing Act, 1865" ..	2,400	2	32	35	16	0
"Crown Lands Licensing Act, 1867" ..	360,391	1	9	2,872	11	1
"Waste Lands Act, 1874" ..	59,279	0	1	1,336	13	3
"Waste Lands Administration Act, 1876"	67	0	0	3	7	0
Waste Lands Act (10-per-cent. clauses) ..	9,413	0	39	579	7	4
Occupation licenses	157,377	2	11	768	7	9
Occupation reserves	6,598	0	2	52	9	8
Mineral leases	9,138	1	33	1,310	14	6
Total ..	604,665	1	7	£6,959	6	7

Amounts collected by Receiver of Land Revenue, Nelson, during Year ending 30th June, 1879.

				£ s. d.		
Land sales	..	..	..	3,223	16	0
Rents of leases, &c.	..	..	..	4,887	2	2
„ Licenses	..	..	..	647	1	9
„ Mineral	..	..	..	2,259	12	6
Royalties	..	..	..	405	0	6
Prospecting licenses	..	..	..	91	13	1
Transfer fees	..	..	..	64	19	0
Fees on Crown Grants—						
Transferred from Deposit Account ..	£142	16	9			
Received	120	3	3			
				263	0	0
Total	..	..	..	£11,842	5	0

Leases, Licenses, &c., issued during Year ending 30th June, 1879.

	No.	Acreage.			Rental.		
		A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
"Waste Lands Act, 1874"	17	6,148	0	4	202	6	9
Waste Lands Act (10-per-cent. clauses) ..	21	2,358	3	34	193	4	1
Occupation licenses	2	1,003	2	11	12	11	0
Licenses over reserves	3	44	1	2	16	0	0
Mineral lease	1	97	0	0	2	10	0
Total	44	9,651	3	11	£426	11	10

Leases forfeited during Year ending 30th June, 1879.

				A.	R.	P.
Waste Lands Acts	..	..	..	2,092	2	24
Waste Lands Acts (10-per-cent. clauses) ..	..	..	..	307	3	13
Mineral	..	..	..	4,346	0	7
Total	..	..	..	£6,746	2	4

Crown grants issued during year ending 30th June, 1879—122.

ALFRED GREENFIELD, Commissioner.

MARLBOROUGH.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THE operation of "The Land Act, 1877," and "The Crown Lands Sale Act, 1877," has been prohibitory to sales. The unsold lands in this district, with some small exceptions, are hill lands not worth more than from 5s. to 10s. per acre, and by the last-named Act cannot be sold for less than £1.

On the south side of the Wairau River the greater part of the Crown lands are mountain tops of inferior pastoral character, running largely into rock and shingle. These lands are under pastoral leases, which will expire in 1882. The leases are, however, renewable at double rents; but, as many of the leaseholders will probably decline to renew them at the double rents, it is desirable that these lands should be open for sale at a price at which they may be expected to sell; for, being surrounded by freeholds belonging to the present holders, no other persons can occupy them to advantage. On the north side of the Wairau River the same objection exists in regard to price. The unsold lands, with some small exceptions, being mountains covered with fern, manuka, or scrub, are too steep to have any agricultural value, and for pasture, in their present wild state, are very far from being worth £1 an acre.

The total area under lease or license is 1,078,470 acres, which is held by 77 holders, averaging under 14,000 acres to each. The total rent received to the end of the year is £4,282 3s. 8d. There are still £148 arrears of rent, thus making a total rental of £1,436 13s. 8d.

The deferred-payment system has been too lately introduced for any evasions to have arisen. The unsold lands are not suitable to this system, and I do not expect that much settlement will take place under it.

The work of the office has been very much reduced since the new Land Act came into operation.

The level and comparatively level forest lands still unsold are about 20,000 acres, and on the hill sides, that may be made available, fully 200,000 acres more. The timber has not been destroyed by fire to any extent, but there has been a good deal of cutting by unlicensed persons.

The rabbit pest in the southern part of the district, at Kaikoura, has rendered some of the lands under pastoral lease not worth holding. It has also made its appearance and done much damage in other parts, but not on Crown lands. By far the most successful mode of dealing with it is poisoning by means of corn steeped with phosphorus and flavoured with oil of rhodium. In some districts where this pest has been very bad it has been almost cleaned out under this treatment. Combined action is necessary on the part of all landholders, and should be made compulsory.

CYRUS GOULTER,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

CANTERBURY.

REPORT of COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

I ENCLOSE returns in response to Circular 16, 14th June, 1879. I thought it well not to include in the general returns of lands sold, for the quarter ending 30th June, 1879, and the year ending same date, the sales made under "The Public Reserves Sale Act, 1878." These are made the subject of a separate paper, which is attached in each case to the general return. The total sales of all descriptions will therefore be, in each case, the sum of the quantities in the two documents. The same remark applies to land sold on deferred payments.* The number of Crown grants issued in the year is 1,316, including 1,989 sections. The total of the monthly claims for draughtsman's work, and engrossing them, is £485 13s. 10d. The number of sheep in Return No. 6 is the best estimate the Chief Inspector can make: the sheepowners' returns for the current year are not yet in. There are no means of ascertaining the number of cattle on Crown lands. Would the Registrar-General know anything about it?

As to the cutting of timber on forest lands, I heard from Mr. Bolton, Ranger, Otago, about a year ago, that unlicensed cutting was being done at Makarora. He purposed doing what he could to check it; and I have heard nothing from him lately about it. The forest lands generally are inaccessible, or so far from population as to present but few inducements to cut timber in them.

"The Land Act, 1877," answers every purpose and works very well, and the departmental business has gone on pleasantly, everybody concerned being, so far as I am aware, quite satisfied with it.

An appeal against a decision of the Land Board on a question of boundary, and another appeal against the valuation of a pasturage run, was commenced in the Supreme Court, but the parties did not proceed with them.

JOHN MARSHMAN,
Commissioner of Crown Lands,

* Transactions under Public Reserves Sale Act, and on deferred payments, referred to in Tables Nos. 2 and 3.

WESTLAND.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THE sales of land continue very dull in Westland, but there has been, and still is, a little more desire to take up land on deferred payments. There is reason to believe that in this manner the progress of settlement will be steady, if not very rapid. It is very desirable that the opening of the horse-track to Okarito should be accompanied by the encouragement of settlement in the southern parts of the district, and steps are now being taken to throw open for selection on deferred payments a block of very good land on the Wanganui River. It has lately been my duty to recommend that a sum should be placed on the estimates for the purpose of opening a somewhat similar block at the Wateroa.

I am also sanguine that settlement at Jackson's Bay may yet be made a reality by a little fostering, and at a moderate outlay upon the settlement block itself, and upon the Paringa and Haast Roads, which will open a communication between it and the rest of the district.

Upon the whole, notwithstanding the depression which has been so prevalent on the whole of this coast, I think that the satisfactory condition of alluvial mining in Westland, caused partly by the Government water-races, and the unprecedented length of good road which is now open, will combine to produce a perceptible improvement in the progress of settlement in Westland.

Rabbit Pest.

I have heard no complaints on this subject.

Forest Timber.

At the end of 1876, when the establishment of a state forest department was contemplated, a calculation was made of the area of forest land in Westland. The area was then fixed at 2,623,550 acres. The return will now stand thus—

	Acres.
Area in 1876	2,623,550
Hill-tops and scrub	691,200
Sold or otherwise alienated	32,350
	723,550
Total	
	1,900,000

I do not know that timber-cutting by unlicensed persons is carried on to a great extent in Westland. No doubt a great deal of timber is cut by miners, but when the trees are on their own claims they have a right to them, and when they are not, as doubtless often happens, it would not do to treat as a trespasser the miner who pays fees directly for all his mining privileges, and whose operations ought certainly to be facilitated as much as possible. "Fire" can do little mischief to the West Coast forests, which are never dry enough to burn.

Miscellaneous.

Number of Crown grants issued during the year ending 30th June, 1879—286. Total land revenue during the same period, £3,322 9s. 9d.

Pastoral licenses, and licenses to occupy purchased lands, are already included in the respective returns relating to them. There are none other to be noticed here.

There has been no particular delay in the issue of Crown grants, which have been got out with a very fair rapidity.

J. GILES,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

OTAGO.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THERE is a considerable falling-off in the sales of rural land within the district during the past year, there having been sold, in the year ending 30th June, 1878, in round numbers, 92,865 acres, while this year the acreage is only 52,744. This decline in the sales has arisen partly from so limited a quantity of land being opened for selection, partly from so much land having been opened up under deferred payments and agricultural leases, partly from the large acreage of private land cut up into farms, and also, in a great measure, from the general depression, from which Otago has not entirely escaped.

Deferred Payments.

The land under this system is still eagerly competed for, though not to the same extent as last year; but, wherever really good agricultural land is thrown open, the demand is still keeping up, and attracts the attention of those who have capital enough to make a fair start.

Agricultural-Lease Land.

This plan of occupation has proved of great advantage to the miners and others resident on the gold fields. As there is no compulsory-residence condition, the miners are enabled to work at their claims and farms alternately, and thus fulfil the conditions of lease whilst, at the same time, earning a livelihood at their usual avocations.

Forest Land.

It will be observed by Return No. 1 that the area of forest land is estimated to be 1,420,000 acres; of course this is a rough approximation, and must be so taken into account. I find that the bush along by the sea-coast, and, indeed, wherever population has become settled, is being much cut up. Endeavours have been made from time to time to adopt measures for its more economical use, but partially without success. Accidental fires have been the principal cause of its destruction, and this it is almost impossible to prevent in parts of the district to which rangers have not been appointed. I have little doubt but that persons are cutting timber without a license, but it would not be easy to obtain a conviction.

Rabbits.

The rabbit pest has now spread up the valley of the Clutha to the Lakes, and they are found more or less over all my district. It has been, however, a good deal mitigated by the energetic use of dog and gun. The difficulty of keeping the pest in check in the Clutha Valley arises from the loose subsoil on the ranges, into which the rabbits burrow with ease. The occupants of all cultivated grounds, however, find little trouble with them, as limited-sized holdings can be thoroughly examined and the rabbits destroyed. The pastoral tenants are the principal sufferers. The carrying capabilities of runs have been, I understand, in some instances reduced by about one-third, although in other parts of the district the provisions of the Rabbit Nuisance Act have been successfully employed in lessening the scourge.

There have been fifty sittings of the Land Board, at which the cases disposed of were 1,210.

Return of Lands and their Classes in the Provincial District of Otago at 30th June, 1879.

Class.	Acres.
Forest	1,421,000
Lakes	284,800
Barren	2,346,240
Agricultural and pastoral	9,308,600
Total area of Provincial District of Otago	13,360,640

	Acres.
Area under pastoral leases and licenses	6,383,389
Area under deferred-payment licenses and exchange agricultural leases at 30th June, 1879	122,936
Area under deferred-payment pastoral licenses	8,910
Area under deferred-payment leases (exchange agricultural leases, including purchased area)	26,922
Area under agricultural leases at 30th June, 1879	75,257
Area under coal-mining leases	979
Area sold within hundreds	1,584,880
Area sold outside hundreds, from 1868	290,463
Area sold outside hundreds previously held under agricultural leases and deferred-payment exchange leases (included in acreage outside hundreds)	74,095
Area of hundreds	1,863,651
Area unsold within hundreds, including area under deferred-payment licenses and leases	278,771

Miscellaneous.

Issued during the year ending 30th June, 1879: Number of Crown grants, 532; occupation licenses (*see* Table No. 7), 44; timber licenses issued by Rangers, 135; depasturing licenses within hundreds, 150.

Land revenue from all sources received in Dunedin and in Invercargill for the Invercargill Land District (including £3,208 4s. 7d. deferred-payment rents and issue fees collected by District Land Officers) and passed through Receiver's cash book, Dunedin, per bank vouchers, viz., £147,536 15s. 1d.

This amount does not include the rents of agricultural and gold-mining leases and other gold fields revenue, nor deferred-payment rents collected by District Officers, the revenue from these sources not passing through Receiver's cash book at Dunedin.

J. P. MAITLAND,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

SOUTHLAND.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

DURING the above period there have been sold 79 acres 1 rood 20 perches of town, 435 acres 3 roods 9 perches of suburban, and 29,396 acres 1 rood 20 perches of rural, land. The sums

realized and the average prices per acre are stated in the quarterly returns already furnished ; which also show how injuriously the land sales have been affected by the financial difficulties prevailing for the last six months.

Sixty-six persons, whose selections amount in the aggregate to 5,532 acres, have been settled under the deferred-payment system ; fifteen selectors in previous years, under the same system, have exchanged their licenses for leases ; and ten others have elected to pay the balance-money on their land and become freeholders at once, rather than remain lessees for the remainder of the term.

There are twenty-six holders of pastoral leases, covering an area of 562,632 acres—a considerable reduction from the return of the preceding year ; the rents of upwards of 90,000 acres of educational endowments still occupied by runholders having been paid direct to the Education Board, instead of to the Receiver of Land Revenue, as formerly.

No evasions of the law have been reported to the Waste Lands Board.

Returns of Crown grants and leases and licenses issued have already been forwarded in tabular forms. I am not aware that there have been any delays in connection with these ; at any rate, no complaints of the kind have reached me.

The total territorial revenue derived from all sources amounts to £78,653 7s. 9d.

The number of sheep returned in Table G was obtained from the Sheep Inspector. The run rents in this district being paid on the acreage occupied, and not in the form of an assessment on the number of cattle depastured, no returns of stock are called for by the Waste Lands Board.

The area of this district originally covered by forest was estimated at 800,000 acres ; but no data exist from which it can be ascertained how much of this consists of worthless timber or scrub. After allowing for this, and deducting the fringes of the bush sold to settlers, and the areas already exhausted by saw-mills, I think it may be safely conjectured that at least 400,000 or 500,000 acres of valuable forest land still remain in the hands of the Crown. I know of no cutting by unlicensed persons, or destruction from fire or other causes.

We hear less of the “rabbit pest” than formerly, perhaps because it is now regarded as a matter of course. In the level and more settled districts I believe it has to some extent been reduced by the exertions of the settlers ; and many thousands of these vermin were destroyed along the banks of the rivers by the high floods of last spring. In such localities we may safely leave the rabbit to be dealt with by an increasing population. But, in the higher and rougher pastoral districts, occupied solely by the runholder and his employés, I believe there is little or no diminution in their numbers, and in some of the more inaccessible places a positive increase. In such country it will be extremely difficult, and in some parts of it almost impossible, to keep the nuisance within bounds, at all events by any appliances known at present. How far the value of Crown land—that is, its capacity for carrying stock—has been thereby affected would not be easy to determine, because there are other concurrent influences which cannot be eliminated from an estimate, notably the late severe and protracted winter, from which, I am persuaded, more stock perished than from the scarcity of feed occasioned by the increase of rabbits.

WALTER H. PEARSON,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

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