

APPENDIX A.

REPORT ON VILLAGE-HOMESTEAD SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS, CANTERBURY, BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS.

In accordance with the instructions from the then Minister of Lands, twenty-two village-homestead special settlements were opened between July, 1886, and August, 1887, in different parts of the Canterbury District, between the Hurunui and Waitaki, the principal settlements being situated at the Hurunui, Waitohi, Oxford, Chertsey, Dromore, Alford Forest, Hinds, Arundel, and Waitaki.

There were 299 sections in all, containing 7,644 acres, laid out in lots of from one to fifty acres each, according to the position of the land or the quality of the soil. Unfortunately, the character of the only land available for these settlements was in most cases of a light stony character, and not suited for much cropping without exhausting and impoverishing the soil, though in some cases, such as the settlement near the Rakaia, at Alford Forest, and Arowhenua, the land is of a fairly good quality, and suitable for the purpose intended.

Out of the land offered, applications were granted for 186 sections, containing 6,025 acres 3 roods 29 perches; but out of these, 31 applicants, representing an area of 1,254 acres 2 roods 24 perches, did not proceed to occupy the land as required by the Village-homestead Special Settlement Regulations, and the leases were forfeited; 18, however, of these sections were again taken up, containing 469 acres 2 roods 37 perches, though 2 of these, containing 39 acres 1 rood 1 perch, were again forfeited, thus leaving 171 leases, containing 5,201 acres 3 roods 1 perch, which are now current. This gives an average of about 30 acres to each lessee.

Out of the 171 lessees, 112 have taken advantage of the £20 advanced by the Government in terms of the regulations to enable them to erect their houses, £2,240 being advanced through Mr. March, the Steward of Village Settlements, after he had duly inspected the buildings erected; 16 have erected houses without the aid of the Government grant: making in all 128 houses erected to date. Of the lessees, 16 are children who have taken up land adjoining their parents or other relatives; and residence has in their cases been dispensed with for three years, in terms of the 148th section of "The Land Act, 1885;" 5 of the lessees at Waimate, where the land is liable to be flooded, have been allowed to live on neighbouring land: leaving 19 lessees, occupying 541 acres 2 roods 16 perches, who were not residing on their land when the last inspection was made. These will in due course be again inspected, to see if they are fulfilling the conditions under which they hold their leases. Three lessees reside in houses built by former tenants with Government grants.

The total annual rental receivable from these lands is £589 15s. 6d., ranging from 1s. 3d. to 10s. per acre, the average being about 2s. 3d. per acre.

On the 1st January last the sum of £251 1s. 10d. was due from 134 lessees; out of that amount £233 3s. 3d. has been collected up to date from 126 tenants: leaving only 8 men, owing £19 18s. 7d. This is, therefore, very satisfactory.

Mr. March, the Steward of Village Settlements, reports that nearly all of the settlers who have taken up their land on these conditions are satisfied with their holdings and prospects, and hope, with the aid of outside work, to be able to hold the land they have taken up, and to pay the rent due to the Crown.

Ordinary Village Settlements.

The first ordinary village settlement under the deferred-payment system was started at South Rakaia in May, 1880, and during the six years ensuing, until the village-homestead special settlements were started in July, 1886, 18 different settlements were established, the principal ones being at Annat, Horndon, South Rakaia, Rangitata, Belfield, Orari, Arowhenua, Fairlie Creek, Otipua, and Waimate. These are all situated in the centre of good agricultural districts, and in most cases the land was of excellent quality and well suited for the purpose of homesteads for industrious men.

The land being situated in long-settled districts, the areas given to each had to be comparatively small, ranging from sections of a quarter of an acre, in Arowhenua, to 5 acres, in Rakaia, and from 1 to 10 acres in the other settlements, the total number of allotments laid out being 720, and the area 3,298 acres; since reduced to 672 allotments, containing 2,835 acres; 48 sections, containing 463 acres, having been withdrawn from the deferred-payment system and set apart on village-homestead special settlement conditions; thus giving on an average about $4\frac{1}{4}$ acres to each allotment.

The settlers at South Rakaia, Orari, Arowhenua, and Fairlie Creek, who had fulfilled the conditions of their licenses, were allowed to increase their holdings.

Five hundred and sixty-one allotments, containing 2,482 acres, were applied for. Out of this the licensees of 244 sections, containing 756 acres 3 roods 11 perches, have paid their final instalment and are entitled to the Crown grants; and 221 holdings, containing an area of 1,515 acres 1 rood 9 perches, are still current, only 13 of them being more than one instalment in arrear.

Ninety-six licenses, representing 210 acres and 31 perches, have been forfeited, the holders not having complied with the conditions under which the land was granted to them. Of the area forfeited, 65 allotments, containing 135 acres 3 roods 23 perches, have been again taken up, in some cases as increased holdings by settlers already resident.

Of the ordinary village-settlement areas held under the deferred-payment system, 346 allotments, containing 1,897 acres, have been built on, and 184 allotments, containing 511 acres and 3 perches, have been granted as increased holdings or to children residing with their relatives on the adjoining land. This would give an average holding of about 7 acres to each family; but as, at Arowhenua, being township land, the settlers have been limited to half an acre, the holdings in the other settlements will average about 9 acres to each family.