

areas of forest Crown lands in the Whakatane County available for selection, and most of it now open as "unsurveyed" land, so that any selector can procure the land immediately he applies. The area is 254,000 acres, but the land, though good, is very broken and difficult of access, and requires a very large expenditure for roads before being really available to would-be settlers.

Lands under Land for Settlements Acts.

Opouriao Estate, Whakatane.—Practically the whole area of this estate is occupied, as there are only two sections without tenants, which were surrendered, and will be selected again directly they are opened. The population now residing upon the estate numbers 199 souls. The season this year so far has been a prosperous one, and the maize yield is estimated at some 80,000 bushels. This, together with wool and other products, should give a gross return of some £8,000 from the estate for the year. At the time of Ranger Bayly's visit in February the establishment of a creamery was mooted, and, if established, will thoroughly insure the success of the settlement.

Okauia Estate (5,920 acres), across the Waihou River from Matamata.—I am glad to say that very few of the sections remain unselected. The area at present under lease is 3,566 acres, held by seven selectors. The area remaining unleased, but which I expect shortly to be taken up, is 1,000 acres 3 roods 30 perches, divided into three sections. The road now being formed into the estate and the repair of the main county road will probably be a further inducement to settlers to select.

Rangiatea Estate (4,004 acres).—I mentioned last year that this estate had just been acquired. It was opened for selection during the year, with the result that 3,101 acres have been selected by seventeen selectors; and of the remaining 753 acres, 521 acres are just about to be taken up, which will leave only 232 acres unselected. The land, though of a light soil, has the advantage of being on the main railway-line to Te Aroha and the Thames.

Karapiro Estate (2,270 acres).—This estate is also a recent purchase (near Cambridge), and directly it was opened for selection, in November, nearly every section was applied for. The area under lease is 2,111 acres, and the balance of two sections will be probably selected very shortly. There are no other estates at present under negotiation for purchase in this district.

GERHARD MUELLER,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

HAWKE'S BAY.

The total area open for sale or selection during the year was 48,737 acres, classified as follows: Under the optional system, 18,552 acres; cash by auction, 2 acres; lease by auction, 336 acres; village lots, 45 acres; and small runs, 29,802 acres.

Summary of Selections.—The total area taken up during the year was 36,964 acres by 117 selectors, lease in perpetuity being the favourite tenure. We have now 767 selectors on our books, an increase of fifty-three over last year, representing an annual rental of £15,553, and an area of 473,130 acres.

Cash Sales.—Five sales have been made, three of them being town sections in Tarawera, Frasertown, and Hampden, one suburban section at Ormondville, and one rural selection in the Tahoraiti district, while an excess of area on a previous selection was also paid for.

Deferred Payments.—Nine licensees have acquired their freeholds over 1,465 acres, leaving seventeen tenants now on our books with 4,658½ acres.

Perpetual Lease.—Thirty selectors have acquired their freeholds over 12,342 acres, and five have exchanged to lease in perpetuity, leaving ninety-one tenants on our books, holding 45,506 acres.

Occupation with Right of Purchase.—Thirty-eight selectors have taken up land under this tenure, comprising an area of 13,122½ acres, the land being situated chiefly in the Mangatoro district. Four selectors have forfeited their holdings, leaving 105 tenants with 38,549 acres.

Lease in Perpetuity.—Seventeen selectors have taken up 9,083 acres, situated principally in the Mangatoro district (Ngapaeruru Block), and the Motu district, in Poverty Bay. One selector has forfeited his holding, there now being 139 tenants, with 77,511 acres, in occupation.

Village Settlements.—One selection under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase system of 1 acre, and two selections under lease in perpetuity of an area of 11 acres 1 rood 25 perches, have been made, while one section of 2 roods 27 perches was purchased for cash. Two selectors under occupation with right of purchase and two under lease in perpetuity have forfeited their holdings, containing 3¼ acres.

Village Settlements under Section 169 of "The Land Act, 1892."—Under this heading are included sections in the villages of Buckley, Norsewood, Tiniroto, Patutahi, Havelock, Weber, Whetukura, and Motu, the total area being 194 acres, occupied by thirty-three selectors, twenty-two of whom are residing. Improvements to the value of £1,213 have been effected.

Village-homestead Special Settlements.—We have two settlements, Woodville and Puketitiri. At Woodville (100 acres) there are twenty-six selectors, twenty-four of whom are residing with their families, ten being original selectors. Improvements to the value of £3,511 10s. have been effected, the total advances to the settlers remaining unpaid being £482. There has been one forfeiture during the year of a 2-acre section. Woodville is a flourishing settlement, there being twenty-six houses built, with cowsheds, gardens, orchards, &c., and at present there are 101 persons residing, all of whom are in comfortable homes.

At Puketitiri there are four tenants holding 88 acres, all of whom are residing. The advances remaining unpaid amount to £40, whilst improvements to the value of £617 have been made. There have been no forfeitures or surrenders during the year.