

Special-settlement Associations.—We have four of these settlements—viz., Waipawa, Dannevirke, Liberal, and Ruahine. The Waipawa and Dannevirke were first taken up in 1886, and fifty-four of the original fifty-eight selectors have now acquired their freeholds over an area of 4,810 acres.

The Liberal Settlement was formed in 1891, and all the original fourteen selectors have either surrendered their leases or have transferred their interests to other settlers, and the surrendered sections have, with one exception, been taken up by other settlers.

The Ruahine Settlement was formed in 1893, and contains 2,400 acres, held by twelve tenants, six of whom are residing, whilst improvements to the value of £3,121 have been effected. Until lately road-access has been difficult, owing to the want of a bridge, but now that it is built access is easy, and more settlers will reside and the settlement flourish.

Improved-farm Settlements.—We have two of these settlements—Waikopiro and Akitio—only two sections of the latter, however, being in this district, most of the settlement being in the Wellington District.

Waikopiro was founded in 1895, when fifteen selectors were put on 1,771 acres, the country generally being broken forest land, with fair soil. All the settlers are residing, 806 acres having been felled and grassed, and 143 acres felled ready for burning, &c. The settlement is making fair progress, considering that up to the present it has had bad road-access, but now that a bridge is being built over the Manawatu River, if the main road is metalled during the next summer good communication will be established with Ormondville, and the settlement should advance and be flourishing.

Akitio was founded in 1896, and, as before mentioned, only two selectors, holding 145½ acres, are within this land district. They have felled and grassed 69 acres, and felled 33 acres ready for grassing when burnt off. Both tenants are living on their selections.

Small Grazing-runs.—Two have been taken up during the year, of a total area of 11,619 acres, with an annual rental of £91 7s. 6d. We have now fifty-four tenants under this system, holding 150,816 acres, of an annual rental of £1,580 17s. 8d.

Pastoral Licenses.—No transactions have taken place during the year, and we have now sixteen selectors on our books, holding 123,359 acres, at a total rental of £593 3s.

Miscellaneous Leases and Licenses.—Four leases have been issued, of a total area of 336½ acres, at an annual rental of £31 15s. Under this heading we have now seventy-three tenants, with a total area of 5,486½ acres, at an annual rental of £505 7s. 4d. The leases chiefly comprise odd bits of Crown land let from year to year till required for settlement, and small sections leased for short periods, while two of the leases are for copper-mining.

Land acquired under Land for Settlements Acts.

There are seven settlements in Hawke's Bay under the Land for Settlements Acts, viz., Raureka, Elsthorpe, Waimarie, Pouparae, Tomoana, Mahora, and Willows, of a total area of 12,957 acres, 12,260½ of which have been taken up by 139 selectors, at an annual rental of £5,683 17s., leaving 463½ acres unlet and 232½ acres occupied by roads and reserves.

Raureka.—This settlement, which is situated near Hastings and was part of the Frimley Estate, was opened for selection in May, 1896, and has made satisfactory progress. There are twenty selectors, holding 416 acres, at an annual rental of £543 2s., and seventeen of them are residing, representing eighty-four persons. The improvements required under the Act are £543 4s., but these have been effected to the value of £1,821 5s.; 101 acres are in crop, the remainder being in gardens, orchards, and grass.

Elsthorpe.—This is a settlement in the Oero district, and was opened for selection in June, 1896. It has made great progress, there now being thirty-six selectors, holding 9,543 acres, at a rental of £2,302 13s. The improvements required to be made by the Act are £2,082 4s. 6d., but they have been effected to the value of £5,836 17s.; twenty-three houses have been built, and twenty-two of the selectors are residing, there being ninety-two persons living on the estate. 233 acres are down in crop, consisting of oats, rape, potatoes, turnips, mangolds, and carrots, the remainder, with the exception of a few acres in orchards and gardens, being in grass.

Waimarie.—A settlement in the Poverty Bay district near Gisborne. It was opened for selection in September, 1896, and contains eighteen selections, with an area of 425 acres 3 roods, held at a rental of £463. Improvements to the value of £1,413 18s. have been made, whilst fifteen buildings have been erected, and thirteen selectors are now residing on their sections; two others live on adjoining land, and three have to take up residence at once. There are 140 acres under crop of maize, barley, and potatoes; the remainder, with the exception of a few acres in orchards and gardens, being in grass. The live-stock consists of twenty-seven horses, thirty-six cows, 250 sheep, three pigs, and two goats. Seven miles of fencing have been erected, and other improvements made. This settlement is making fair progress, and during the year a grant of £185 has been expended by the Ormond Road Board in forming and metalling 1 mile 18 chains of the road through the settlement. One section forfeited last year has been taken up during the past twelve months.

Pouparae.—A settlement near Gisborne, in Poverty Bay. It was opened for selection in April, 1897, and contains 338 acres, taken up by nine selectors, at an annual rental of £405 8s. The total improvements to date are £786 15s., of which £381 7s. have been effected during the past year. The area under crop is 66 acres of maize and potatoes, while a few acres are in gardens and orchards, and the balance under grass. Three miles and a quarter of fencing have been put up, and eight buildings erected. Five selectors are residing, and the stock consists of fourteen horses, ninety-nine head of cattle, 750 sheep, and twelve pigs, so that the settlement is making steady progress.