

MARLBOROUGH.

The total area open for sale or selection during the year was 195,865 acres, classified as follows: Optional system, 13,566 acres; cash by auction, 4,117 acres; leases by auction and application, 335 acres; pastoral runs, 139,632 acres; small grazing-runs, 17,138 acres; and lease in perpetuity, 21,077 acres.

Summary of Land taken up.—This table shows that 51,824 acres was disposed of, the number of selectors being ninety-seven.

Cash Sales.—5,141 acres was sold for cash to four purchasers, 1,014 acres being sold under the optional system, and 4,127 acres by auction.

Deferred Payments.—One holding, of 72 acres, was converted into freehold during the year. There are now only ten selectors under this tenure, holding an area of 580 acres.

Perpetual Leases.—This table is the same as last year.

Occupation with Right of Purchase.—There were nine new selectors during the year, and the area taken up was 3,081 acres. Under this system we have now twenty-six selectors, holding an area of 7,580 acres.

Lease in Perpetuity.—The area taken up this year was 7,432 acres, by twenty-five selectors. The total area now held is 66,355 acres, and the number of selectors 137.

Land under Land for Settlements Acts.

Blind River Estate.—The present season has been the most favourable since 1895-96. The Ranger reports that instead of blighted crops, parched-up pastures, and starving stock, as was the case last year, he found on his last visit that (with a few exceptions, mainly due to inferior cultivation) the grain-crops were good, the root-crops (especially onions) were promising well, and of grass there was everywhere more than the stock could consume. Since the present occupant of the accommodation-house took possession there has been a marked improvement in the conduct of the house—good meals, comfortable beds, and plenty of horse-feed can be obtained at Blenheim charges. The total value of improvements required was £596 10s., and the total value effected £4,201 15s. 6d. All the sections on the estate are now taken up. The following abstract shows the present position of the estate: Dwellings, 16; persons residing, 95; horses, 52; cattle, 46; sheep, 3,557; pigs, 67. Value of buildings, £2,010. Value of fencing, £2,191 15s. 6d. Area cultivated, 1,175 acres. Crops: Wheat—346 acres, 7,823 bushels, value £782 6s.; oats—109 acres, 972 bushels, and 83 tons chaff, value £238 18s.; barley—221 acres, 4,970 bushels, value £750; peas—117 acres, 1,889 bushels, value £379 16s.; beans—2 acres, 20 bushels, value £3; potatoes—10 acres, 58 tons, value £116; onions—34½ acres, 114 tons, value £456: total, £2,726.

Omaka Estate.—Notwithstanding the favourable season, the crops on this estate were light, the greatest yield being 27 bushels per acre, and the average 16½ bushels to the acre. This seems to indicate that portions of the land were overcropped by the previous owner. The total value of improvements required was £589 6s. 8d., and the total value effected £3,987 5s. The present condition of the estate is shown in the following abstract: Dwellings, 12; persons residing, 55; horses, 52; cattle, 36; sheep, 2,513; pigs, 4. Area cultivated, 1,223½ acres. Value of buildings and fencing, £3,348 15s. Crops: Wheat—431 acres, 7,377 bushels, value £737 14s.; oats—210 acres, 2,703 bushels, and 73 tons of chaff, value £348 19s. 6d.; barley—50 acres, 644 bushels, value £96 12s.; peas—19 acres, 216 bushels, value £43 4s.; potatoes—1 acre, 5 tons, value £10: total, £1,236 9s. 6d. Sown grasses, 396 acres; green crops, 117 acres.

Puhipuhi Estate.—This estate is now merged into the Puhipuhi Block, which has recently been subdivided for settlement, and will be offered for selection in May.

Starborough Estate.—This estate is situated on the south bank of the Awatere River, about eighteen miles from Blenheim. Both the main coach-road and the railway now under construction pass through the estate. The total area of the estate as purchased is 35,849 acres. Of this area, 33,691 acres, in fifty allotments, was offered for disposal on the 13th March, as follows: 20,825 acres under lease in perpetuity, 12,531 acres as small grazing-runs, and 335 acres under temporary grazing licenses. All the grazing-runs were taken up at once, as also 18,472 acres of the lease-in-perpetuity sections and 289 acres of the temporary grazing licenses. 131 acres on the estate has been set apart for the Township of Seddon, and will be offered shortly, as also will be 1,006 acres subdivided into suburban allotments, ranging from 46 acres to 169 acres.

Richmond Brook Estate.—Arrangements to acquire this estate have been made, and the survey of it into sections is now in hand. It will be ready to be opened for selection shortly.

Mining Districts Land Occupation Act.—There were not any new transactions this year.

Village-homestead Special Settlements.—This table is also the same as last year as regards the number of holders and area held. Of the fourteen selectors, eleven are resident and three are not. Of the 234 acres held, 186 acres is laid down in pasture or cultivated. The value of improvements is £1,363, and the number of souls is sixty-two.

Small Grazing-runs.—5,166 acres was taken up this year, by four selectors. The total number now holding under this tenure is seventy-six, and the area held is 69,178 acres.

Pastoral Runs.—There were nine runs taken up this year, of an aggregate area of 86,067 acres. One run was forfeited, four have expired, one was surrendered, and three exchanged for leases in perpetuity; the total area of forfeitures, expiries, and surrenders being 46,168 acres. The total area now held is 798,255 acres, and the number of selectors seventy-five.

Miscellaneous Leases.—Three of these leases were issued during the year, one being a timber license, and the other two are reserves.

Revenue.—This was £1,237 less than that collected last year. Under the heading "Cash lands" £3,000 less was received than last year; consequently some of the other tenures show a