

The Molesworth-Tarndale Station continues to show signs of improvement, and evidence of increase in plant cover is apparent over most of the eroded areas. Provided the rabbits are kept under control, the future prospects are encouraging. Here, again, the shortage of labour has restricted development operations, and the main effort has been confined to the eradication of rabbits and seasonal work.

The winter and spring were very severe with frequent falls of snow, and although there were no exceptional losses of cattle, the adverse conditions were reflected in a reduced calving.

The experimental area referred to in last year's report has been fenced in readiness for the establishment of trial plots by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

The station was visited in February by the District Committee for Soil Conservation and River Control. The Committee expressed satisfaction at the evidence of natural regeneration as a result of the Department's control of grazing and rabbiting operations.

Two properties were acquired in this district during the year—Sedgemere Block, of approximately 1,200 acres, near Seddon, and Greenhills, of 4,900 acres, twenty miles from Kaikoura.

Sedgemere was acquired under Part II of the Servicemen's Settlement and Land Sales Act, 1943, and the Crown took possession on 22nd February, 1944. It comprises good-quality flats and easy downs, practically all ploughable and suitable for subdivision into three holdings adaptable for fat-lamb raising and cropping. The block is now stocked with 2,200 sheep, including 1,500 ewes.

Greenhills, which was purchased under the Small Farms Act, with possession on 29th March, 1944, comprises some 1,000 acres of fair flats and ploughable downs, the balance being easy to steep hill country. The stock at present on the property is 3,200 sheep, including 2,000 breeding-ewes.

Both blocks are being developed with a view to settlement of discharged servicemen.

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Nelson.—There are two blocks in this district—Pakihi and Organ's, containing together 2,292 acres. Maintenance work only is being carried out, and there has been no material alteration since last year's report.

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Christchurch.—Five blocks, containing 13,271 acres, are being farmed or developed under the Small Farms Act, and six blocks, containing 4,041 acres, under the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929. An area of 640 acres was added to the Valetta Block during the year, and a property known as Templeton's, an area of 184 acres in the Woodbury District, was also taken over.

Weather conditions throughout the year have been generally unfavourable to cultivation, although the considerable rainfall in the late spring and again in February promoted quick growth in existing pastures. This rainfall benefited crops on the lighter plains land, but caused reduced returns on heavier land. A severe winter was experienced with a particularly heavy snowfall in Mid-Canterbury. Stock losses were lighter than anticipated, but the adverse conditions were reflected in the wool-clip, and caused a substantial drop in the lambing percentages.

During the year one block, McKenzie, was selected by a discharged serviceman, but he was unable to carry on due to war disability. The block was again taken over by the Department, and a discharged serviceman installed as manager with prospects of being granted a lease next season.

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Dunedin.—In the Otago District two blocks are being developed—Papanui, of 1,082 acres, and Arclif, of 4,804 acres. New development work has been curtailed due to the shortage of labour, but on Arclif 250 acres were worked and sown in new grass and 135 acres in turnips and swedes.

Generally speaking, the year has been a favourable one. The winter set in early with heavy snow on the high country, and a dry summer was followed by copious rains which have been beneficial to pastures but retarded harvesting operations. Owing to the lush feed, lambs have been late in fattening and weights have been lighter.

In March two blocks in the North Otago District were purchased, the Island Cliff Block, of 2,349 acres, some twenty-five miles from Oamaru, and Taipo Hill Block, 468 acres, nine miles south from Oamaru.

Island Cliff comprises easy rolling country lying well, and is at present carrying 2,300 ewes. It is proposed to subdivide into five holdings.

Taipo Hill is very heavy land and considered some of the best in North Otago, growing good wheat and potatoes. The area will subdivide into three good mixed farms.

Both blocks are being developed with a view to soldier settlement at a later date.

Commissioner of Crown Lands, Invercargill.—In the Southland District two blocks are subject to the Small Farms Act, the Spurhead Block, of 2,223 acres, and the Anderson Gift Block, of 600 acres. On both blocks development work was confined mainly to drainage operations.

The weather conditions were favourable and stock did well, as also did the crops, with the exception of 50 acres linen flax, for which the season was presumably too dry.

Individual Tenants under the Small Farms Act

The majority of the individual tenants established under the Small Farms Act, 1932–33, are in the North Auckland and Auckland Land Districts and occupy dairy units. The following particulars are supplied relative to these areas:—

North Auckland.—In most parts of the district there has been very little of the drought conditions of the previous years, and the season has been a good one. It is therefore difficult to gauge the extent of the decline in production due to the rationing of fertilizer. Practically all of the settlers who were with the Armed Forces have now returned to their holdings. Development has, for the most part, reached the stage which will enable the farms to be worked as economic units.

Auckland.—The effect of the shortage of top-dressing manures is now becoming apparent, particularly as most of the farms are situated in the light pumice area of Rotorua and Bay of Plenty. Returns were also affected by the unseasonable weather conditions.

The following statistical schedules give more particular detail and information in respect of the blocks at present under development. The blocks which are subject to the Small Farms Act, 1932–33, and Land Laws Amendment Act, 1929, respectively, are shown separately, while those blocks which have been purchased for the settlement of discharged servicemen have their names printed in bold type.