

Selectors on the Books.—The total number of selectors on the books at the close of the year was 1,658, an increase of forty-three as compared with last year.

Cash Lands.—The dealings with lands disposed of for cash under the Land Act consisted of ten applications for 114 acres of rural land opened on the optional system; five purchases of rural land at auction, the total area being 413 acres; and sixty-four purchases of an area of 79 acres of town, suburban, and village lands at auction. In some of the townships the whole of the previously unsold sections have been bought.

Deferred Payments.—The number of selectors under this system is now but seventy-two, holding an area of 15,285 acres, nine licensees having purchased the freehold of 1,346 acres during the year.

Perpetual Lease.—The number of selectors remaining under this tenure is ninety-three, retaining an area of 16,433 acres. Five lessees obtained the freehold of a total area of 960 acres. One lessee exchanged to lease in perpetuity, and one lease was forfeited. Since it has been ruled that the holders of perpetual leases may acquire the freehold at any time during the term of lease the number of applications to purchase the freehold has diminished.

Occupation with Right of Purchase.—During the year a pronounced disposition to favour this system has been apparent, fifty selections of rural land having been made of an area of 7,443 acres, as against eight selections on lease in perpetuity of an area of 1,675 acres. There are now on the books 216 selectors, holding 44,459 acres, there having been four forfeitures and two surrenders in the course of the year.

Lease in Perpetuity.—Eight selections of rural land were made under this tenure, of an area of 1,675 acres. The total number of lessees is now 229, and the area held by them 73,845 acres.

Village Settlements (all tenures).—The number of lessees in village settlements under the old tenures of deferred payment and perpetual lease is steadily decreasing through the purchase of the freehold, there remaining now but twelve selectors on deferred payment and 104 on perpetual lease. Twenty-one selections on lease in perpetuity, of a total area of 369 acres, have been made during the year. The total number of lessees under all the tenures is 425, the area held being 6,134 acres.

Small Grazing-runs.—Only one small grazing-run, area 8,824 acres, was selected during the year, and this consisted of three runs, grouped, formerly held by members of one family. There are but eighteen selectors under this system, holding an area of 61,293 acres.

Pastoral Runs.—Of pastoral runs, six were taken up, area 57,379 acres; one was forfeited, area 3,200 acres; and one surrendered, area 1,000 acres. The licenses now held number ninety-one, covering an area of 1,282,907 acres.

Miscellaneous Leases and Licenses.—Fifty-three licenses were granted or purchased at auction, the total area of same being 4,713 acres. There are 274 lessees upon the books, the area held being 38,141 acres.

Under the Land for Settlements Act two grazing licenses were taken up, area 1,165 acres; the net area held being 4,089 acres, by seven licensees.

“The Mining Districts Land Occupation Act, 1894.”—Eight leases under this Act have been issued during the year, the total area being 174 acres, the majority of the applications made being for exchanges from licenses held under “The Mining Act, 1891,” or for small areas formerly held under that Act.

Improved-farm Settlements.

Haldane (Waikawa District, Block IX.).—The settlers upon this settlement number sixteen, occupying 2,087 acres, with an average of four in each family, and owning 334 head of cattle. Only two sections in the settlement are vacant. The dairy factory on this settlement has proved, of great benefit to the settlers.

Waikawa (Waikawa District, Block XVII.).—Five settlers occupy 977 acres in this settlement and own 127 head of cattle, the number of souls residing being thirty-three. There are six sections vacant, containing an area of 707 acres. The settlement has not by any means been a successful one, owing in part to the unsuitable character of the land, and, further, to some of the settlers leaving the settlement as soon as Government expenditure and assistance ceased.

Papatotara (Alton District).—The fifteen sections in this settlement are occupied by twelve settlers, with an average of four in a family. Area, 1,480 acres, with 120 head of cattle thereon. The settlers on this settlement mostly maintain themselves by cutting sleepers.

Moturimu (Campbelltown Hundred, Block VIII.).—The whole of this settlement is occupied by nine settlers, having families averaging six. The area occupied is 658 acres, with seventy-three cattle. The settlement is near the Woodend Sawmills, where most of the settlers and some members of their families obtain employment.

The settlers now remaining upon the improved-farm settlements appear more satisfied with their positions, and I expect that, with the exception of the Waikawa Settlement, all of them will become prosperous settlements. The lessees are now all paying rent, and most of their leases have been issued.

Land for Settlements.

Merrivale (Waiau District).—The whole of this settlement is occupied, there being thirty-seven houses upon it, in which 150 persons reside. The total value of the improvements effected by the lessees is £7,598. The lessees number forty-seven, holding an area of 9,474 acres.