

Transfers.—The number of transfers during the year was as follows:—

Tenure.	Number.	Area.		
		A.	R.	P.
Deferred payments	5	923	2	7
Perpetual leases	17	1,245	3	25
Occupation with right of purchase	3	310	0	11
Lease in perpetuity (ordinary Crown lands)	43	8,396	3	4
Lease in perpetuity (land for settlements)	38	6,944	3	23
Occupation leases (Mining Districts Land Occupation Act)	6	162	1	16
Small grazing-runs	9	15,489	3	38
Pastoral runs	9	77,309	0	10
Miscellaneous	8	2,005	0	2
Totals	138	112,787	2	16

Arrears.—As indicated in my remarks under the heading “Rebates of Rent,” the arrears are now much less than they were at the 31st March, 1901. From the summary it will be seen that the gross number of selectors in arrear is 178, representing an area of 77,627 acres, the amount owing being £3,291 16s. 11d., as against 259 selectors, 92,557 acres, and £5,130 0s. 2d. arrears, a difference of eighty-one selectors, 14,930 acres, and £1,838 3s. 3d. arrears, notwithstanding the increase in the number of selectors on the books—a result which I think, under all the circumstances, must be regarded as very satisfactory.

Swinburn Farm-homestead Association.—This settlement is in much the same position as at the date of my last report, fourteen settlers occupying an area of 2,765 acres 1 rood 12 perches, at a yearly rental of £121 2s. 4d., the total amount received during the year being £106 11s. 7d. It may perhaps be as well to state that the association has practically ceased to exist, and that the tenants on the block are now, to all intents and purposes, simply ordinary lessees under the lease-in-perpetuity system. There are twelve houses and forty persons resident; value of improvements, £1,877. Ranger Atkinson reports in respect of this block as follows: “The people on this settlement are doing fairly well. The number of the original settlers is becoming gradually less, their places being taken by other settlers in the neighbourhood. The past season has been especially favourable for the settlers of the interior as regards feed, which has not been so plentiful for many years. The nine remaining of the original fourteen seem to be satisfied, and the conditions of their leases are being fairly well complied with.”

Settlers' Progress generally and Settlement Conditions.—In reporting as to the progress made by settlers generally on ordinary Crown lands the Crown Lands Rangers state as follows: “During the past year good progress has been made on ordinary Crown lands. The prices ruling for grain last season were low, but good returns were obtained in most cases. The favourable prices then obtained for fat lambs and sheep were also instrumental in assisting farmers generally. This year, however, fewer lambs are coming forward, owing principally to the shortness of feed in the early part of the season, which was excessively dry. When the drought broke up in December last feed at once became plentiful, but it was too late in the year for early lambs. The crops, which until then were very backward, came on very quickly, and notwithstanding the lateness of the season large yields of grain were promised everywhere. Unfortunately, however, a wet harvest was experienced, with the result that serious losses occurred nearly all over Otago. The prices for grain this year promise to be high, while even damaged grain is commanding a good price; and, as a matter of fact, discoloured grain is bringing a better price than the first-class grain of last year. The turnip-crops are very good, but potatoes have suffered through the excessive moisture of the last few months. In the bush districts generally the settlers have made very good progress during the year. Many of the worst roads have been improved, new dairy factories have been started, while the price of cattle has been very good. With the exception of some parts of Central Otago, where the land as a rule is dry and poor, the residence and improvement conditions of the various leases have been well complied with.”

The ordinary inspections made by the Crown Lands Rangers during the year number 1,475, the aggregate area thus represented being 476,211 acres. The value of improvements required on the holdings visited amounts to £172,244 7s. 8d., while the value of those actually effected is appraised at £185,326 9s., an excess of £13,082 over requirements. This excess, though not so great in proportion as reported last year, may be regarded as satisfactory, taking into consideration the fact that the inspections included a much larger extent of rough country in the interior on which improvements cannot with advantage be effected to the same extent as in more favoured localities. The Rangers have also performed a large amount of work of a special character, apart from ordinary inspections, in relation to Land Board matters requiring special inspection, valuations, &c., and in reporting on numerous applications for miscellaneous temporary licenses, occupation leases, bush licenses, &c.

Improved-farm Settlements.

A few slight changes have been made in the allotment of sections as well as adjustments of areas during the year, there now being fifty-three selectors holding an aggregate area of 7,466 acres in five of the settlements hereinafter mentioned, or three selectors less and a few acres more than shown in last year's returns. The number of persons resident is 264 as against 291, the area felled 3,586 acres as against 3,446 acres, the area grassed 2,787 as against 3,428, and the number of cattle on the allotments 1,121 as against 1,044 last year. The amount paid to settlers for improvements was—for houses, £17; bushfelling and other works, £1,536 3s. 7d.; making the total payments to selectors from the commencement of the settlements to the 31st March last £18,097 1s. 3d. The Inspector reports,—