

OFFICE-WORK.

The work of the office is steadily increasing year by year, and I am again pleased to acknowledge the willing co-operation and assistance rendered by the various officers, and would beg in particular to place on record my thanks and appreciation of the invaluable services rendered to the Department, and this office in particular, by Mr. Fannin, Chief Clerk, who by his assiduous attention to the minutest details, and intimate knowledge of all questions pertaining to land-administration, has been invaluable to me in carrying out the many duties and conduct of the office throughout the year.

JOHN HAY,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

CHEVIOT ESTATE.

(Canterbury District.)

LAND TRANSACTIONS.

The transactions during the year have been very small, comprising only the sale of six quarter-acre sections in Mackenzie Township, the purchase of which, although effected in the previous year, was only completed in the period under review; and the disposal of four temporary-occupation licenses. A surrender was accepted of one lease in perpetuity of a section of 11 acres and 7 perches held by the Cheviot Co-operative Dairy Company which has ceased operations, and several temporary-occupation licenses of small areas have been surrendered. With these trifling exceptions, the areas occupied remain practically unchanged.

LANDS TO BE OPENED.

Arrangements are now in hand with a view to offering for cash sale at auction a few township sections at Domett, which will shortly become the temporary terminus of the Waipara-Cheviot Railway.

The present lease of the Woolshed Block of 162 acres, close to Mackenzie Township, will expire on the 1st September next, and the question of dealing with the land, and the extensive but rather old and dilapidated buildings thereon, is being taken into consideration.

CONDITION OF SETTLEMENT.

The Ranger's report shows that the estate continues to prosper, and signs of progress are found in the increased comforts and improved appearance of the settlers' homes. Only at Mackenzie, however, is there an actual increase of householders, but the number of actual farm settlers and their children on the land has slightly decreased, owing to transfer operations.

Shearing and lambing returns have been good; but crops were damaged by hail and rain storms, which have considerably diminished the average yields. Less than one-fourth of the ploughable area of the estate is now used for cropping, and out of a total area of 7,084 acres in crop this season, only 2,783 acres were in grain-crops. The total number of live-stock now carried on the estate (including freehold lands) amounts to about 2,500 head of cattle and horses, 700 pigs, and about 100,000 sheep, the latter mostly breeding-ewes, from which an average lambing of 90 per cent. was obtained this year. Dairying, however, is being neglected at present, and the public dairy factory with its expensive machinery is now lying idle.

The Ranger mentions that there has been much scour of drains and watercourses throughout the estate during the year; and the matter is becoming serious, as fully 100 acres of the best land has been swept away during the past few years, and but little is being done by settlers to check the loss.

There is only one case in which the required residence conditions have not been fully complied with, although the lessee is residing on the estate. There are also two or three cases in which the value of improvements effected is not up to full legal requirements. The persons resident upon the leaseholds number 760 souls, exclusive of the population in the township on freehold lands. The improvements required by the terms of the leases amount to £47,618, and the value actually effected is £97,570 10s.

THOS. HUMPHRIES,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.