

CANTERBURY.

LANDS OPENED DURING THE YEAR.

One new estate, known as the Culverden Settlement, has been acquired and disposed of during the year. This estate, which comprised a total area of 25,829 acres, is situated about sixty-nine miles northward from Christchurch, at the present terminus of the main north line of railway. Twenty-five sections, comprising an area of 22,654 acres 3 roods, were opened for selection by public application; three sections, containing 2,627 acres 3 roods (which were selected by ballot out of the settlement), were allotted to employees on the estate; and two sections, comprising 282 acres 3 roods 15 perches, were granted to the holders of leases from the former owners. The lands comprised in the Culverden Township and some small adjacent areas were held over for later disposal.

For the twenty-five sections, comprising 22,654 acres 3 roods, which were opened for application on the 19th June, 1908, 793 applicants lodged 983 separate applications, covering the whole of the sections offered. In the subsequent examination by the Land Board 107 applicants were rejected for various reasons. The largest number of applicants that entered the ballot for any one section was ninety-six, and the smallest three. The whole of the sections were allotted at the first ballot, but two of the selectors subsequently surrendered their holdings, and these two sections, comprising 2,564 acres 1 rood, were reoffered on the 2nd September, 1908, and immediately selected.

The Culverden Township lands, comprising 80 acres 3 roods 3 perches, in thirty-three sections, were opened for selection on the 27th January, 1909, under the renewable-lease system, and nine sections, comprising 20 acres 1 rood 29 perches, have been selected. Five sections, comprising 3 acres, had previously been allotted to the holders of leases from the former owners.

PAYMENT OF RENTS.

The arrears of rent owing on the 31st March, 1909, are considerably more than usual, owing to the fact that permission has been granted to most of the holders in the Kinloch Settlement (who have experienced considerable difficulties in the initial stages of their occupation) to postpone payment of the two half-years' rent which became due on the 1st July, 1908, and 1st January, 1909, and the former of these therefore appears in the returns as rent in arrear. The exclusion of the arrears on this settlement would bring the total for all other settlements down to £796, owing by thirty-nine tenants, this amount being slightly under 1 per cent. of the total annual rent-roll.

In July, 1908, very severe floods were experienced in South Canterbury, and in some cases caused considerable damage to Crown leaseholds, principally in the Waikakahi Settlement.

During the year rebates for punctual payment of rents due were granted to 1,149 tenants, the total amount granted being £6,621 9s. 2d.

CONDITION OF ESTABLISHED SETTLEMENTS.

A general review of the reports received from the Crown Lands Rangers on the condition of the forty-nine established settlements within the district again emphasizes the previous reports as to the valuable extent of *bona fide* settlement that has been secured by the operation of the Land for Settlements Acts in Canterbury. The extremely small proportion of tenants who have failed to fully comply with the obligations of their leases reveals a highly satisfactory condition of affairs, and in most of these cases the default consists merely in failure to bring improvements up to the full value required by the terms of the leases, a defect which experience shows will be remedied in nearly all cases as soon as settlers' means and the requirements of their holdings will permit. From one end of the district to the other the Rangers find, with few exceptions, a prosperous and contented tenantry, for the most part farming their holdings and maintaining their improvements in a manner at least equal to that achieved by occupiers of freehold lands. The subdivision of the large estates which formerly comprised many of the settlements has resulted not only in an enormous increase of the value placed on the land in the form of buildings, fences, and other permanent improvements, but also in a very marked and gratifying increase in the productiveness of the soil, owing to the bringing into cultivation of fresh areas or the renewing of pastures, resulting in an increased output both of crop-products and of stock.

The Ranger's report on the Culverden Settlement, which was established in June, 1908, shows that every one of the rural tenants is residing; twenty new dwelling-houses have been erected, and the total value of new improvements effected is £9,180. Including families resident on township leaseholds, the population of the settlement is 143 souls. The number of sheep shorn was 17,548, and the lambing averaged about 90 per cent.; 575 acres was in grain crops, and 1,322 acres in root or green crops; the latter yielded fair returns, but oats, which formed the bulk of the grain crops, were put in too late in the season, and only gave poor returns. The tenants generally appear to be practical farmers, and to be hopeful of success.

The other settlements in North Canterbury are progressing satisfactorily, and generally are in a prosperous condition, and the requirements of the leases are well fulfilled. Crops have yielded fair returns, somewhat diminished in a few cases by the ravages of caterpillar pest.

The two settlements in the vicinity of Little River, Banks Peninsula—namely, the Morice and Kinloch Settlements—established in September, 1905, and March, 1906, respectively, can hardly yet be described as having assured prospects of success. In the Morice Settlement the holdings are used principally for dairying and grass-seeding; the former has given fair returns, but the price of the latter had fallen off. In the Kinloch Settlement most of the holdings are used exclusively for sheep-pasturage purposes, and difficulties of access, adverse weather conditions, and high rents have combined to prevent the settlers from making much progress. A good many of the