

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

AUCKLAND.

(H. M. SKEET, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

NEW SETTLEMENTS.

Two new settlements have been opened up during the last two months of the year—namely, Parahi Settlement, in the Otamatea County, consisting of 2,120 acres divided into nine sections varying from 59 to 387 acres, and the Waitakaruru Settlement, adjoining the Hauraki Plains, and comprising 2,299 acres divided into fifteen sections varying from 67 to 268 acres. In neither case was there much demand for the land, and portions of both settlements remain unselected at the close of the year.

NUMBER OF TENANTS, ETC.

The number of holders of settlement lands on the books at the close of the year was 904, occupying an area of 175,190 acres, and paying £24,562 per annum. Notwithstanding the new selections during the year, the total number shows a net decrease of fifty-five holders and 10,308 acres, the loss being, of course, due to a large number of holders acquiring the freehold.

CONDITION OF ESTABLISHED SETTLEMENTS.

The Rangers' reports show that the old-established settlements in the district are generally in a prosperous condition, with comfortable homesteads and substantial improvements, and every indication of permanent and successful settlement. In some of these settlements a fair amount of subdivision is going on, with good results. Most of the settlers carry on dairying, for which good facilities in the form of creameries exist; the amount of cropping done is therefore very limited, although probably more might be done in the way of growing root and fodder crops with advantage.

The Balachraggan and Otway Settlements, situated in the Thames Valley, which were established during the preceding year, have made good progress; the lessees are complying with conditions in a satisfactory manner, and there is every prospect of success. The Ohauiti Settlement, near Tauranga, however, has encountered difficulties, and although some of the lessees are complying and working hard on their holdings, their position is not yet assured.

The small suburban settlements near Auckland are doing well; many of the lessees are acquiring the freehold of their sections and are subdividing into smaller areas for building purposes.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(W. H. SKINNER, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The settlers holding land under the Land for Settlements Act in the northern portion of the district have had a fairly successful year, considering the very dry spring and summer we have just experienced.

The settlers on Wigan, Ngatapa, Kanakanaia, Clydebank, and a large majority of the Te Arai settlers, go in principally for sheep-farming, breeding and fattening cattle.

The prices received this season for wool, beef, and mutton have been a record for the district.

The settlers who go in exclusively for dairying have in most cases a few acres of lucerne, which has been invaluable during the dry summer. The splendid result of this fodder has been an object-lesson to others, and undoubtedly will result in its being grown more extensively all over this district.

One of the Ngatapa settlers tried a 10-acre paddock of wheat, which threshed close on 30 bushels to the acre. Taking into consideration the very dry season, this must be considered very satisfactory.

On account of the very dry spring there was not so much cropping as usual, and the crops generally were not so good; but the very high prices ruling for chaff, oats, barley, maize, &c., more than make up for the difference.

There are now nineteen settlements in the southern portion of the district.

Owing to a prolonged drought experienced in Hawke's Bay, and extending from Ormondville northwards, settlers have been severely handicapped, and those engaged in dairying pursuits have felt the pressure acutely. To counterbalance this to some extent, prices for butter and cheese have been considerably above the average.

Tongoio Settlement: A marked improvement is to be seen in the way settlers are dealing with the blackberry trouble, and the Natives are also showing some practical work in the clearing of this pest on adjoining lands.

Taking the unfavourable season into consideration, our settlement settlers might have fared worse than they have done, and may reasonably look forward to better results this year.