

OTAGO.

(R. T. SADD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the season ending 31st March, 1920, forty-five discharged soldiers have been allotted sections on lands acquired by the Land Purchase Board. These lands consist of the following:—

Gladbrook, consisting of a total area of 6,340 acres, was subdivided into sections ranging from 3 acres to 107 acres in area. This land is of excellent quality, and was acquired at a very reasonable price. It is suitable either for dairying or mixed farming, and owing to its proximity to the Otago Central Railway and a butter-factory the prospects of the settlers are very satisfactory. Part of this estate was used as homestead-sites for the Gladbrook Run adjoining. There were six subdivisions of this run, for which there was very keen competition.

Tokoiti Settlement, near Milton, area 2,100 acres, was subdivided into four sections, and these were also readily selected.

Melville Park, 107 acres of very rich land in the Borough of Mosgiel. This high-priced land, suitable for mixed farming, poultry, bees, or market-gardening, apparently did not appeal to the soldiers, as only three sections were selected.

Crosshill Settlement, also high-quality land, with an area of 255 acres subdivided into six farms suitable for mixed farming or dairying, although now all selected, was not much sought after; apparently what the soldiers require is lower-priced land consisting of part agricultural and part grazing-land suitable for sheep-farming.

A large area of land was acquired under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1917, and a fair area under section 3 of the same Act. Considerably more might have been done under these clauses of the Act had not the prices asked by the vendors in many cases been prohibitive.

Mr. A. T. N. Simpson, the Supervisor of Soldier Settlements, has done excellent work during the past year, and his report deals more fully with the details as to the prospects of the soldier settlers.

The following runs have been subdivided on the expiry of the licenses, and have been surveyed and prepared for offering for discharged soldiers: Kyeburn Runs—nine subdivisions, containing an aggregate area of 32,776 acres. Puketoi—six subdivisions; total area, 34,340 acres. Ida Valley—one subdivision; area, 20,900 acres. Moutere—one run, containing 7,100 acres, and eight small farms, with a total area of 608 acres. Moa Flat Downs Run, containing 20,000 acres, is being prepared for disposal.

SOUTHLAND.

(THOS. BROOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the past year the work in connection with the discharged soldiers has considerably increased, and a very large volume of business is being done in applications for assistance to purchase freehold properties or to discharge existing mortgages. A preference exists in this district for advances under section 2 of the 1917 Act. Judging from the reports of the soldiers' Supervisor and the prompt manner in which instalments and interest are paid, the soldier settlers appear to be doing remarkably well and endeavouring to make a success of their holdings. The farms purchased are mostly used for dairying and grazing, there being very few devoted to agriculture, most of the crops grown being for winter feed only. A return was received from every soldier settler showing amount of stock, implements, and crops on his farm as at 31st March, 1920, and when compared with the amount of advances made it was ascertained that the Department had a good margin of security. As to the town houses, no systematic inspection has been made since purchase, but I am pleased to state that the demands for payment have been promptly met. In this connection I might state that in this district in nearly every case the payments are being made monthly, and although this involves a considerable amount of extra office-work it is considered to be in the best interest of the soldier as well as of the State.

During the year three settlements were purchased under the Lands for Settlement Act, and on being opened for selection by returned soldiers only all the sections were disposed of.

The soldiers' Supervisor made a special inspection of these and other estates on which soldiers are settled, and from a perusal of his report it may be gathered that the majority of the tenants are practical farmers shaping well, and are confident of success.