

The figures in the above table may be classified again under a few headings, in order to compare them with similar ones of previous years. In this table, the smaller holdings, known generally as village holdings, come under one of the three recognised tenures of cash, deferred payment, or some form of lease. The differences are really more in name than anything else :—

	1891.		1892.		1893.		1894.	
	No.	Area.	No.	Area.	No.	Area.	No.	Area.
		Acres.		Acres.		Acres.		Acres.
Cash	661	100,222	581	40,930	627	36,882	500	34,999
Deferred payment ..	315	35,081	246	40,649	198	21,474	96	12,668
Perpetual lease ..	854	290,248	1,036	287,664	549	125,192	17	3,854
Occupation with right of purchase ..	..	..	..	..	161	54,271	471	103,499
Lease in perpetuity ..	..	..	..	..	964	212,701	1,228	255,348
Pastoral runs ..	195	1,682,761	206	1,004,416	119	1,104,226	227	898,945

The deferred-payment and perpetual-lease selections included in the columns for 1894 comprise cases which come under the 114th section of "The Land Act, 1892," already referred to, under which a settler holding not more than 640 acres under either of those tenures may select adjoining Crown lands up to that limit, to be held under the same tenure as his original selection; but the greater number of this class of selections shown in the table were made under the old Nelson system, which were not completed at the date of last return. It will be noticed that the selections under the lease-in-perpetuity system are much more numerous than under any other. This is largely due to the fact that special-settlement associations, village settlements, and village homestead special settlements can only be selected under that tenure; there is no choice, as in the case of the ordinary Crown lands thrown open for optional selection. In order to arrive at an approximate idea of which system of tenure takes most with the public, the rural lands dealt with under Part III. of the Act must be referred to. As, however, the totals include in them the cases of cash selections coming under the 114th section, the results are not exact. Bearing the above remarks in mind, the figures will stand as follows: Cash selections, 249; lease in perpetuity, 447; occupation with right of purchase, 461. The latter system seems to be favoured in the Auckland District more than in any other part of the colony, as over half the total number of selections occurred there. This is due probably to the low value of the lands in that district, which thus offers a greater chance of securing the freehold between the tenth and twenty-fifth year of occupancy. Lands opened under the village homestead special-settlement system, the special-settlement-association system, the greater part of the Cheviot Estate, and lands acquired under the Land for Settlements Act are offered under the lease-in-perpetuity system without option of tenure, and all these go, therefore, to swell the returns under that heading. Nevertheless, the lease-in-perpetuity system seems, as shown by the figures, to be a favourite with the public in all other districts but Auckland, and, to the man of small means, the advantage of having to pay only a 4-per-cent. rental on the capital value of the land—thus freeing his capital for the development of his estate—are manifest.

The total number of selections of land on all systems is 2,876, but this includes 337 purchases or selections of miscellaneous leases and licenses which cannot in all cases be included in permanent settlement, for some of the leases and licenses are for temporary purposes and short terms. If these and the pastoral leases—85—and town sections—173—are omitted also, we shall arrive at the number of settlers who may be considered as having selected for the purpose of occupying the land. This number is 2,281, a decrease of 161 on the same figures for last year. These figures do not include several associations with whom arrangements have been completed as to the selection of their blocks, for until the ballot for the individual sections takes place they are not entered in the returns. The total number of selections under all headings, as compared with last year, shows a decrease of 195 selections, the figures being: 1893, 3,071; 1894, 2,876. The decrease in number of selectors is, no doubt, largely due to the fact that the area of Crown lands to select from is very much less, and they are also often very inaccessible. In many districts the want of available lands is felt very severely, and is retarding settlement to a considerable extent. There have been also many causes in the circumstances of the colony which have affected all systems, but more especially the selection of rural lands for cash. The cash-sales shown in the returns do not include the Mansion Block at Cheviot, as the sale was not completed until a few days after the financial year closed.

In order to arrive at the average size of holding taken up during the past twelve months, town lands, miscellaneous leases and licenses, pastoral runs, and small grazing-runs are excluded; the rest represent more or less close settlement, in which the soil is the mainstay of the selector. The average comes out at 194 acres, that for the previous year being 190 acres. In these figures are included the special-settlement associations, the average size of sections in which must, by law, be 200 acres. As, however, small grazing-runs and the Cheviot grazing-farms may properly be included in the term "settlement-lands," by including these we get an average-sized section of 292 acres.

The mean prices at which lands have been disposed of for the last year, exclusive of the Cheviot Estate and lands acquired under the Land for Settlements Act, have been: For cash, 13s. per acre; for occupation with right of purchase, 14s. 9d. per acre; for lease in perpetuity, 17s. 6d. per acre—prices which do not differ materially from those of the year before.

The area of land thrown open for selection, including Cheviot Estate, and lands acquired under The Land for Settlements Act, are as given below. This table does not, however, represent so much new land for the first time opened for selection, as it includes all forfeitures and change of systems. Much of it remains open for selection at the present time.