

CHEVIOT ESTATE.

During the year one section of $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres has been selected on lease in perpetuity, and one suburban allotment of 4 acres 3 roods 39 perches at Mackenzie has been sold for cash. Early in the year a number of Mackenzie town sections and reserves were offered for sale and lease, with fairly satisfactory results.

The areas held under the different tenures on the estate are practically the same as last year.

In respect of the holdings taken up at the first three sales in November, 1893, and January and March, 1894, the sixth year's tenancy has now expired, and reports on these have been furnished by Mr. Ward. The following table briefly summarises the results:—

Tenure.	No. of Holders.	Area.	Improvements		Lessees actually resident on own Holdings.	Deficient in Value of Improvements.
			Required.	Effectd.		
		A. R. P.	£	£		
Ordinary lease in perpetuity	106	23,911 0 33	27,062	36,955	92	13
Village homestead	77	2,480 1 0	3,750	7,989	56	5
Grazing-farms	39	45,691 0 9	15,778	18,330	23	2
	222	72,082 2 2	46,590	63,274	171	20

The holders, on the whole, are complying in a very satisfactory manner. They are making the best use of their holdings, and are getting large areas of them into English grass pasture. All the larger holders there are doing well out of sheep-farming. But as regards those whose holdings are not large enough to keep sufficient sheep to advantage, these have suffered to some extent, both from the low prices ruling for grain and from the fact that the high price of store sheep has hindered them from reaping a due amount of profit in fattening their sheep on the rape and turnips grown. These holders also suffered badly from frosts coming when the corn crops at were in bloom. Of the total number of holdings which are held under settlement conditions, all save twenty holdings have the value in improvements on them required by the Land Act; and all of the holders, save one who has left on account of illness, and one who has gone to the war, are resident at Cheviot, though in fifteen cases, where the holders are chiefly single men or women, they are more frequently resident with their relatives on adjacent sections than in the houses erected on their own holdings. The improvements effected include the present value of cultivation and grass, which the Land Act allows, but whose value as a permanent improvement is uncertain and cannot well be estimated.

The newly commenced branch line of railway from Waipara to Cheviot will, no doubt, give useful employment to many of the smaller holders on the estate during its construction, and will, when completed, afford the settlers easy outlet for their produce, and materially enhance the value of their properties.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The Land Board has held thirty-three ordinary and special meetings during the year, and the number of statutory applications for lands offered for disposal which were considered by the Board was 458, of which 140 were granted, besides the many other matters of important business which arise to be dealt with at each sitting. Mr. D. McMillan, who has been a member of the Board for many years, retired at the end of the year, in consequence of his departure on a visit to England. His varied and practical knowledge of all matters connected with the working and occupation of land, coupled with his experience of the administration of the land-laws, make his retirement a loss that will be greatly felt by all members of the Board. The following approximate figures will serve to show in part the amount of clerical work passed through the office: Letters received and despatched, including ordinary recorded correspondence and rent notices, weekly returns, &c., 22,500; about 3,000 lithographs and sale-plans distributed; 1,200 vouchers passed through the accountant's office, representing an imprest account of £6,755 and a general expenditure of about £250,000. In the Receiver of Land Revenue's office, besides the ordinary year's revenue of £93,667 14s. 8d., for which 4,099 receipts were issued, a sum of £26,890 1s. 9d. was paid into, and £57,181 19s. 10d. paid out from, the Deposit Account, in addition to the moneys passed through the Local Bodies' Deposit Account, amounting to about £3,700, all of which necessitated the preparation of numerous receipts, vouchers, notices, and other documents.

PORT ROBINSON LANDING-SERVICE.

Mr. J. Sinclair, the Harbourmaster, reports as follows:—

Enclosed is statement of revenue and expenditure at Port Robinson landing-service during the year from the 31st March, 1899, to the 31st March, 1900.

The revenue is less than last year. This is partly owing to the County Council having reduced the shipping charges on wheat from 6s. to 5s. per ton, and also to a falling-off in some lines of import. I enclose a comparative statement showing the difference in the two periods.