

kahi), 1 rood; school-sites in Lyndon, Hekeao, Kohika, and Kapua Settlements, 22 acres; gravel-reserves, various localities, 21 acres 1 rood 11 perches; forest-preservation at Raincliff and Kohika, 220 acres 1 rood 14 perches; river improvement and protection (in the Pareora River, for the protection and preservation of the Borough of Timaru water-supply), 194 acres: total, 569 acres and 25 perches.

*Crown Lands Rangers' Reports.*—The general condition of settlement throughout the district, as disclosed by reports received from the Crown Land Rangers, continues to be very satisfactory. The holdings under Land for Settlements Acts and the village settlements are specially dealt with elsewhere, and as regards the other classes of tenure it may be said that the conditions of leases are well fulfilled. The improvements, especially on the older holdings and hilly lands, do not now increase much, but are well maintained. In the hilly area of South Canterbury there is still a demand for low-lying lands to work with the pastoral country, in order to enable the latter to be successfully worked to the best advantage. On the plains in the Ashburton County the once numerous Crown leaseholds have been considerably reduced by conversion to freehold, but the remaining ones are in good order and satisfactorily occupied, and the season has been especially favourable for these light lands. In the north the numerous holdings around the shores of Lake Ellesmere have suffered considerably from flooding, despite which the lessees generally fulfil the requirements of their leases in a very satisfactory manner, the exceptions consisting principally of deficient value of improvements, which cannot remuneratively be effected up to the amount required by law. The small grazing-runs in North Canterbury are well worked, the improvements are valuable and kept in good order.

As in previous years, a very large amount of extra work has devolved upon the Rangers, including inspection of properties offered for closer settlement, of areas of waste land, river-beds, &c., applied for, besides a variety of matters which cannot be classified. In the south, where cropping is extensively practised, a great deal of time is taken up with inspecting and noting the conditions of cultivation and areas in crop on holdings under the Land for Settlements Act, so as to see whether the regulations as to rotation of crops, &c., are observed. In the north, where cropping is much less resorted to, the Ranger's duties in this respect are light, but, on the other hand, he has the inspection of timber-cutting areas near Oxford, and has also inspected several pastoral runs to obtain information required by the Run Classification Commissioners.

With these multifarious duties the Rangers' time is very fully occupied, and it is difficult for them to keep pace therewith. Another Ranger is needed to keep properly abreast of the work. During the year we have had the benefit of assistance for a few months, during which time valuable aid was rendered.

The total number of holdings inspected by the Rangers during the year, in respect of which residence and improvements were required, was 1,613, covering an area of 276,681 acres. The total value of improvements effected was £322,928, against £153,912 required, and the number of defaulters for all causes was 109.

*Crown Lands for Disposal, 1903-4.*—I append a statement, compiled from the "Crown Lands Guide," showing the areas of Crown lands in the district which were lying open for selection at the 31st March, 1903:—

CROWN LANDS OPEN FOR SELECTION ON THE 31ST MARCH, 1903.

Tenure under which Land is open.	Area.			Counties in which situated.
	A.	R.	P.	
Village allotments ...	0	1	0	Geraldine.
Village-homestead allotments ...	112	3	35	Ashburton and Geraldine.
Optional selection, under Part III. of "The Land Act, 1892"—				
First-class surveyed ...	179	0	11	Ashburton and Geraldine.
Second-class " ...	435	2	11	
First-class unsurveyed ...	481	0	0	Selwyn and Ashburton.
Second-class " ...	370	0	0	Ashburton.
Small grazing-runs ...	2,331	0	0	Waimate.
Hanmer Springs leases ...	6	1	9	Amuri.
Land for Settlements Acts ...	41	3	37	Selwyn, Ashburton, Geraldine, Waimate
Total ...	3,958	0	23	

The lands to be offered for disposal during the year will comprise 8,174 acres on the north side of the Waimakariri River, in the vicinity of Oxford and View Hill. These consist of light lands, and will be offered in areas ranging from  $5\frac{1}{2}$  to 521 acres for optional selection under Part III. of "The Land Act, 1892."

Under the pastoral-run system there will be offered the eight runs, aggregating 111,420 acres, which were not disposed of at the February sales. Some of these will be opened for lease on application, and in other cases, where variations of the original terms appear desirable, they will be reoffered for lease by public auction. The existing pastoral licenses of a few runs in the Amuri district will expire on the 1st March, 1905, and these will have to be reoffered before the 1st March, 1904.

A number of sections in the Darfield Township will be offered for cash sale by public auction and a few reserves, whereof the existing leases will shortly expire, will be reoffered for lease by auction.