

develop the industry at Karangarua, the lessees having procured a fine steam-launch to enable the fibre to be transhipped. The lack of harbours or reliable bar-ports is the great drawback to the expansion of this industry. The establishment of these flax-mills has already led to the settlement of lands, many of the operatives having selected contiguous areas. Despite the difficulties mentioned, the flax-milling industry in this district is decidedly a commercial success, and owners appear contented with the outlook.

CROWN LANDS FOR DISPOSAL DURING THE YEAR 1906-7.

The Crown lands at present available and to be thrown open for selection, apart from pastoral runs, amount to 137,078 acres, and are classified thus :—

—	Town and Suburban Lands.	Rural Lands.		Pastoral Runs.	
		Surveyed.	Unsurveyed.		
<i>Lands now open for Selection.</i>					
	Acres. 118	Acres. 7,747	Acres. 94,205	Number. 57	Acres. 786,810
<i>Lands to be thrown open for Selection.</i>					
	...	33,669	...	8	127,000
Total lands available during coming year	118	41,416	94,205	65	913,810

All these rural lands are or will be obtainable under "The Bush and Swamp Crown Lands Settlement Act, 1903." Of the surveyed rural lands, 1,299 acres, between Waiho and Bruce Bay, are open for selection under all tenures of the optional system, the balance is available on lease in perpetuity only, and is located in blocks all over the district. The pastoral runs cover all the country fit for depasturing stock.

The surveys having been nearly completed, five blocks of rural lands in various localities will be placed in the market at an early date, and the other areas will continuously follow as soon as they are subdivided. There is still a steady growing demand for settlement lands, and it is confidently expected that they will be occupied during the coming season.

The provisions of "The Bush and Swamp Crown Lands Settlement Act, 1903," have proved most applicable to this densely timbered country, and have greatly induced the settlement of many areas during the year.

PAYMENTS TO LOCAL BODIES.

Proposals and plans by the Westland County Council for the expenditure of "thirds" amounting to £404 5s. 1d. were duly investigated, and, after careful inspection and check, were recommended to the Land Board and approved.

As the Land Board only approved of the payment of the "halves" of timber and flax royalties to the local bodies in April, 1906, these amounts do not appear in this year's report.

ERADICATION OF NOXIOUS WEEDS.

Determined efforts are being made by many of our settlers to cope with this evil, and several are close-grazing sheep on pastures infected with ragwort, with good results.

The sum of £105 10s. 6d. was paid for the destruction of these weeds on Crown lands, on the certificate of the Inspector of Stock.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The Land Board has held fourteen ordinary and special meetings during the year, and, as remarked above, has made several inspection visits to various parts of the district. The number of applications and items dealt with was 1,559, or an average of 111 at each meeting, being an increase of 88 per cent. on last year.

The following items represent approximately the amount of clerical work put through by the Department during the last twelve months: The sale posters, Land Guides, and lithographs distributed aggregated 880; the number of vouchers which passed through the Accountant's Office was 1,550, representing £43,868; cheques issued, £2,681; amount paid out of imprest was £26,705; 9,404 letters and telegrams received and despatched; 2,158 notices sent out; 185 Auditor's cards; 1,882 receipts; 144 departmental returns furnished; 590 leases and similar documents prepared; besides reports to the Wardens, to the Advances Office, and other Departments.

Once more it affords me much pleasure to record the willing assistance of the staff in our attempt to efficiently administer this district.

OBITUARY.

On the 18th August last, the senior member of the Land Board, Mr. Andrew Matheson, passed away. For upwards of twenty years he had been a continuous member, and, from his commercial ability, his knowledge of the district and its people, as well as his aptitude and probity, he was especially helpful in the successful working-out of the great problem of the prosperous settlement of our Crown lands.

G. J. ROBERTS,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.