

MARLBOROUGH.

The table below gives a summary of the land transactions within this land district for the year ended 31st March, 1908. The area dealt with is 81,954 acres, selected by sixty persons; and the amount received during the year is £32,955 5s. 4d., or £30 10s. 3d. less than last year; but, as the rent in arrear is this year £90 16s. 10d. more than it was at this time last year, the gross rent we should have collected shows an increase of £60 6s. 7d.

TABLE SHOWING TRANSACTIONS AND REVENUE.

Nature and Tenure of Lands selected.	Number of Selectors.	Area.			Cash received on Past and Current Transactions.		
		A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
Suburban lands	1	16	3	0	418	15	0
Rural lands sold for cash	5	189	2	33	475	1	1
Occupation with right of purchase made freehold ... ..	...	...	...	...	490	17	6
Perpetual leases ... ..	...	...	...	...	30	10	8
Occupation with right of purchase	4	1,017	0	0	535	13	8
Lease in perpetuity	10	3,229	1	15	2,878	3	5
Village settlements—							
Perpetual lease ... ..	...	...	...	...	1	2	6
Lease in perpetuity ... ..	...	...	...	...	15	15	6
Special-settlement associations—							
Perpetual lease ... ..	...	...	...	...	14	14	11
Occupation leases, Mining Districts Land Occupation Act	8	713	0	0	46	7	9
Small grazing-runs ... ..	...	...	...	...	2,905	3	5
Pastoral runs	2	74,750	0	0	3,918	12	2
Miscellaneous leases and licenses	17	1,955	2	11	2,470	13	8
Miscellaneous ... ..	...	...	...	...	163	4	1
Land for Settlements Acts—							
Lease in perpetuity	12	78	2	3	11,065	15	11
Small grazing-runs ... ..	...	...	...	...	6,874	9	8
Miscellaneous leases	1	5	0	0	650	4	5
Totals	60	81,954	3	22	32,955	5	4

Owing to the limited area of suitable Crown lands within this district, the progress of settlement has been very slow, but the demand for good land is as keen as ever.

The total number of selectors now stands at 1,074, or thirty-four more than last year: these are chiefly on some sections taken up in the Rai Valley; selections under section 115 of "The Land Act, 1892," generally in the northern portion of the district; and some miscellaneous licenses. The reasons why section 115 is so greatly used in this district are, chiefly, because in the early days of the settlement all the river-flats and much of the lower slopes of the hills were either purchased or held under lease for a long time, leaving only the poorer lands behind, inaccessible without going to the expense of acquiring expensive road-rights through the freeholds—rights which generally would exceed the total value of the lands to be benefited. This form of settlement, although valuable in enabling the settlers to extend small sections and make their holdings large enough to make a living from, greatly increases the cost of the surveys. The settlers in the northern division of the district have very much to contend with, because the soil is frequently poor, is much subject to reversion to fern and rubbish, and appears to be singularly suitable to the growth of all kinds of noxious weeds; it is also frequently broken and rocky land. Fortunately, it has a much greater rainfall than the district south of the Wairau River; but even this part has suffered a good deal by the drought, and consequently there has been a great deal of damage done by bush-fires, causing loss of fencing, grass, and stock.

GRASS-SEED.

The Government has assisted the settlers in this part of the district very materially by supplying them with grass-seed, to be paid for within four years. Twenty-two settlers have had assistance given to them in this way, at a total cost of £1,717. About 1,650 acres of Crown land, which had the bush burnt off it, has been sown at a cost, up to date, of £1,550 3s. 0d. This will be recovered by loading its cost on to the land as it is selected. The fires causing the loss of grass, stock, and fencing, although considerable, have done an immense amount of good in clearing off many badly burnt clearings, which, under normal conditions, would have taken a great deal of labour and years to have got into the same state as they now present, and when the soreness of the loss is healed the fire will be appreciated as probably one of the best things that could have happened to the settlers.

The area of bush felled during the year has been roughly estimated at 900 acres, but there has also been burnt a considerable area of standing bush.

The flax-dressing industry, although just now in rather a depressed condition, has been of considerable assistance to the settlers during the year, and in some cases has formed a welcome addition to the receipts.